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# VIKING RAIDERS

BY EDWARD PACKARD

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BY EDWARD PACKARD

ILLUSTRATED BY RON WING

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**RL 4, age 10 and up**

VIKING RAIDERS
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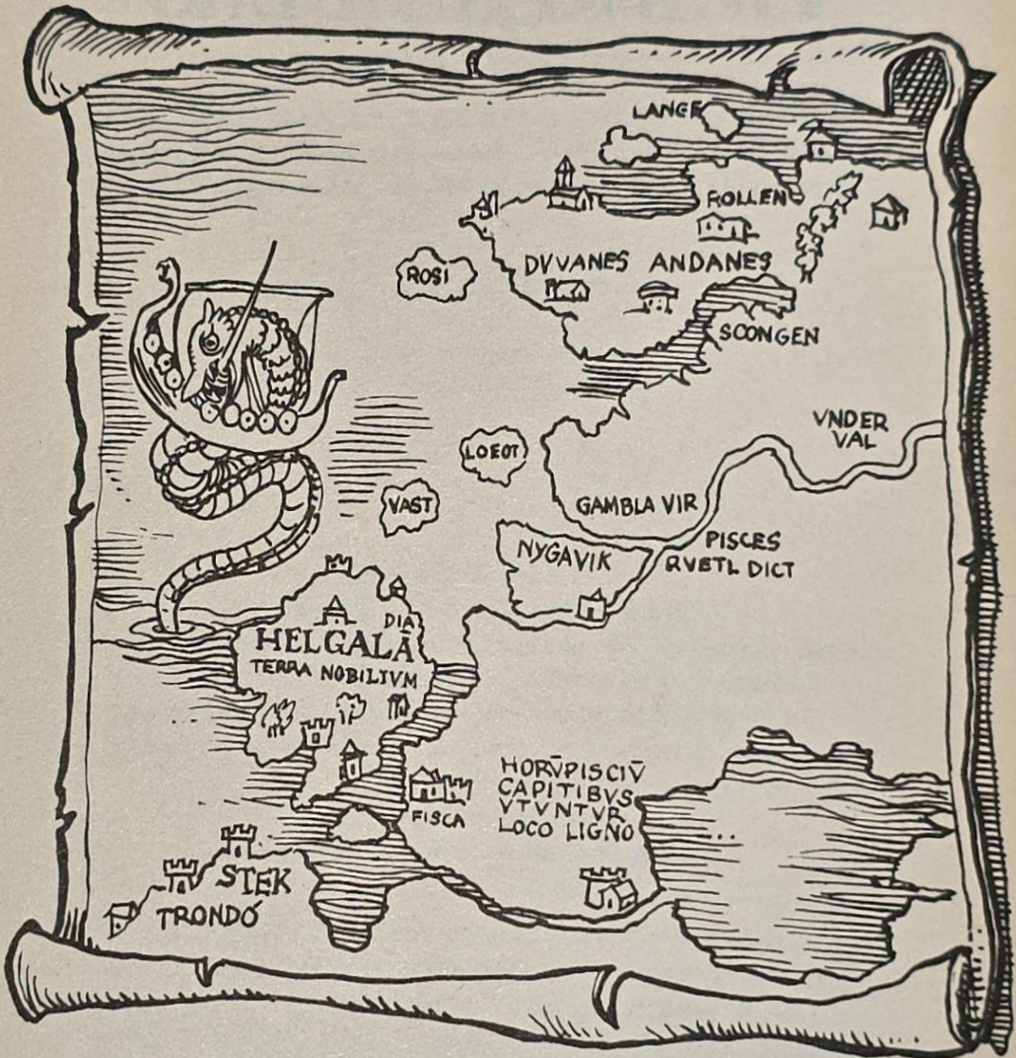
# VIKING RAIDERS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# WARNING!!!

Do not read this book straight through from beginning to end. These pages contain many different adventures that you may have as you try to survive in the harsh and often violent world of the Vikings.

From time to time as you read along, you'll have a chance to make a choice. After you make your decision, follow the instructions to find out what happens to you next.

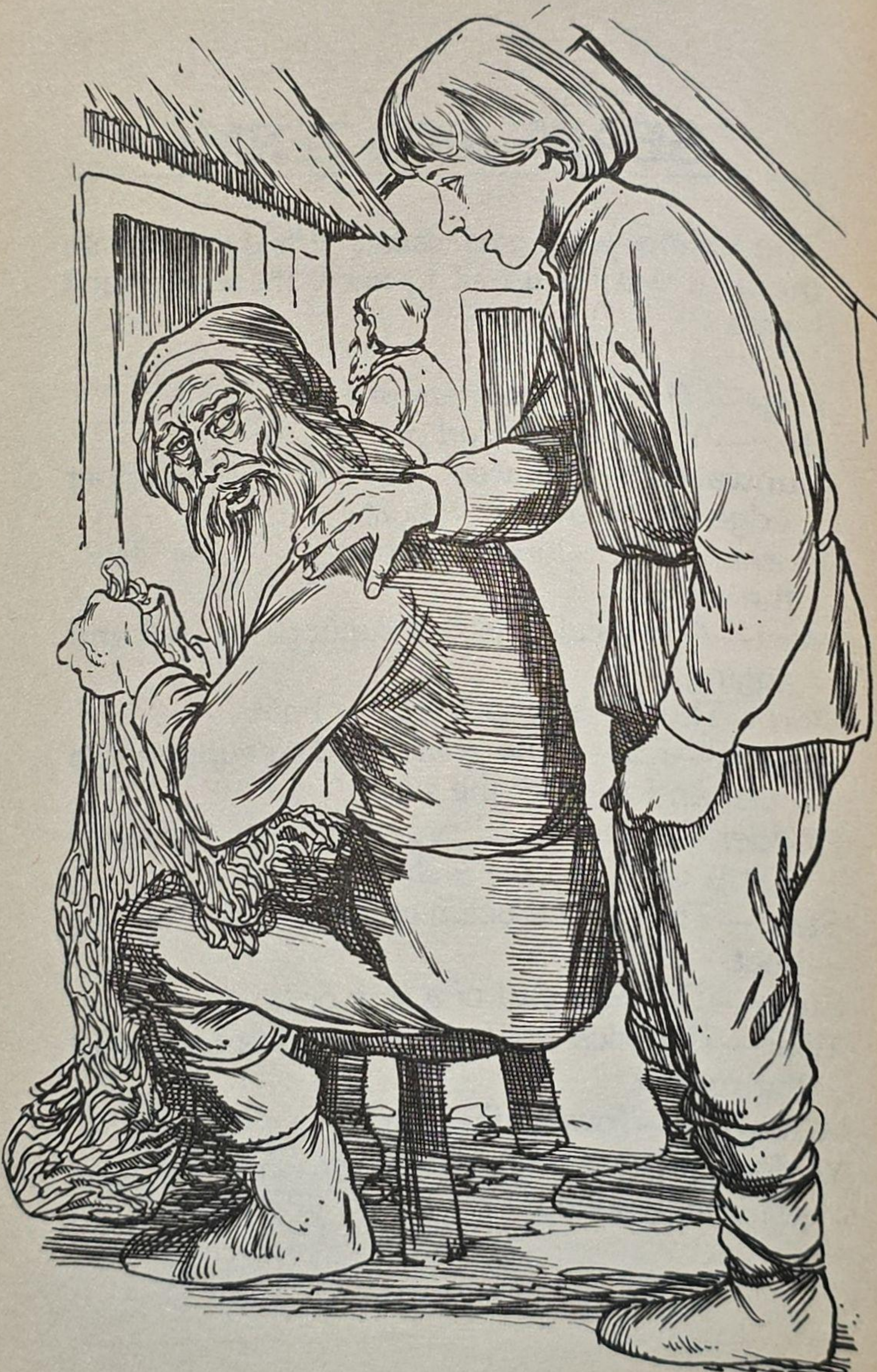
As a young Viking slave, your life is all work and no play. But you are determined to escape and regain your freedom. Plan your escape route carefully. There are many deadly surprises awaiting you by land or by sea. But if you succeed, you may attain a life of glory and honor. To help you in your adventures, a list of seafaring terms is included on the next page.

Good luck!

# SEAFARING TERMS

The Vikings were great sailors. While you're with them, it will be useful to know these seafaring terms.

Bilge—The inside bottom of a boat.
Bow—The forward end of a ship or boat.
Gunwales (pronounced "gun-nels")—The upper edge of the sides of a boat.
Leeward (pronounced "lou-ard")—Away from the wind.
Mast—A vertical pole that supports the sail and rigging.
Port—The left side of a ship or boat.
Rigging—Ropes and wires used to support the mast and to work the sail.
Rudder—A flat board projecting into the water that is used to steer a ship.
Stem—The curved beam at the bow of a ship or boat.
Stern—The rear end of a ship or boat.
Tiller—The stick the helmsman holds to control the rudder.
Windward—Toward the wind.
Yardarm—A horizontal pole from which a square sail is suspended.



You are living in the kingdom of Norway during the Viking Age, almost a thousand years ago. Life has not been easy for you. When you were a small child, you were taken from your village by Kalf the Cruel, a fierce Viking chieftain. You became one of his slaves, and since then life has been one difficult chore after another. From morning to night, you've had to carry rocks, gather firewood, knead dough, shear sheep, sweep floors, clean pots, and do a thousand other tasks. You've often dreamed of escaping from your heartless master, but you know that if you were caught, the punishment would be a slow, painful death. So you stay put, keeping your fantasies of a life of freedom to yourself.

One day Kalf orders you and some other slaves to prepare to go with him and his warriors on a hunting trip. Your heart sinks when you hear this command. You know that the trip won't be any fun for you or the other slaves. You'll have to carry heavy packs and sleep on the hard ground, and you'll have practically nothing to eat unless the warriors toss you some scraps at the evening campfire. What's worse, Kalf has a terrible temper. On his last hunting trip he got angry at one of his slaves and threw him off a cliff.

The day before the journey, you pay a visit to another slave, a wise old man named Ingvar, who has treated you as kindly as if you were his own grandson. You find him sitting on a stool outside his hut, weaving ropes into a fishing net. He looks up as you approach.

---

*Turn to page 2.*

"Kalf has ordered me to go on his hunting party," you tell Ingvar. "We leave tomorrow at sunrise. I came to say good-bye in case I don't make it back."

"If you do return, you won't find me," Ingvar says. "I have not long to live in this world, and I have decided to spend my remaining days as a free man. Once Kalf has set out on his trip, I shall leave this village and go to a place where no one will ever find me."

"Where is it, Ingvar?"

"That is a secret I cannot tell *even* you," he says.

You hesitate for a moment, wondering whether to tell the kindly old man of your own dreams of freedom. "I'd like to escape, too," you finally say hesitantly. "Maybe being brought along on this hunting trip is not a curse, as I first thought. Maybe it is a blessing. Maybe it is my chance to escape this life of slavery."

This thought has just occurred to you, and you look at Ingvar nervously, wondering if you've said too much.

*Go on to the next page.*

Ingvar leans closer to you, and you think you see a look of approval in his tired blue eyes. "You are brave, young one," he says. "If you let your courage be your guide, the gods will help you. I think I can be of some help, too. Kalf is going hunting for elk, and I know the route he will take. The first night's camp is near the base of a waterfall. When everyone is asleep, you can sneak off. The noise of the falls will keep anyone from hearing you. Follow the path along the brook beneath the falls. The path leads to a fishing village where you can find refuge."

"What do you think Kalf will do to me if he catches me?" you say, feeling more nervous than ever despite Ingvar's words of encouragement.

"Better to risk death than spend your life as a slave," Ingvar says. "That is a lesson I have learned when it is almost too late. Have courage, my child. If you succeed, you will be richly rewarded."

You thank Ingvar for his help and advice and bid him farewell.

The hunting party sets out at dawn the next morning. Hour after hour you trudge along a forest path, your back loaded with skins and fur wraps, dried meat, water jugs, and spears.

When darkness falls, Kalf orders everyone to make camp by the waterfall, just as Ingvar predicted. A three-quarter moon is rising in the sky. You decide to make your escape as soon as the others are asleep, but you're so exhausted that you fall asleep yourself.

---

*Turn to page 9.*

"Who are you?" the Irish chieftain asks in your own language, which he must have learned from previous raiders. You quickly tell him what has happened and point toward where the Viking ship is anchored.

The Viking warriors are greatly outnumbered, and the Irish are ready for them. Torfinn must realize it, for he and his men are now retreating back into the woods.

The Irish chieftain sends a runner to get reinforcements from a nearby village. About an hour later more men arrive, armed with swords and shields. The chieftain orders you to lead them to the Viking ship. You arrive at the beach just in time to see the *Osprey* heading out of the cove into the open sea.

The chieftain stands beside you, watching the Viking ship pass out of sight. He must be wondering, as you are, whether Torfinn and his warriors will make it back to Norway.

As you and the band of Irishmen start back to the village, the chieftain places a hand on your shoulder. "You saved us from certain death and destruction. You are welcome to live among us," he says. "From now on you are one of our family."

You thank the chieftain and accept his invitation to stay. You have a feeling you'll be happy living with these people, and that's a good thing, for in fact you have no other choice.

**The End**

"I'm telling you, this is not a good place to land," Svein says. "You don't know Torfinn." He grabs the pail and begins bailing out the boat. The waves are getting higher all the time.

"But it's getting rough," you say. "Where else would we go?"

"Anywhere else would be better."

"Anywhere but the bottom of the sea," you say. "And that's where we're going to be if we don't land soon."

The two of you argue for a few more minutes. Finally, Svein says, "It's my father's boat, so I should be the captain. And I don't want to land here."

Svein seems determined, and as he says, it is his father's boat. You realize that this is one of those times when you don't have any choice. "Which way shall we head, then?" you say.

"Down the coast, toward our own people," Svein replies firmly.

He takes over the oars and pulls for all he's worth. He makes good progress for a while, but before long the tide and wind begin to force the boat farther and farther from shore.

All the while the seas grow higher, until finally a great wave breaks over the side. You bail furiously, but water comes in faster than you can get it out. Soon the boat is completely swamped, and all you and Svein can do is cling to the wreckage until the ice-cold sea drains the heat from your bodies.

**The End**

One of the villagers holds you tightly while another runs up with a rope and ties you to a tree. All is confusion as the villagers gather their weapons and prepare to defend themselves. A boy goes running off down the meadow, perhaps to get more help.

A few moments later the Viking warriors swarm into the village, shouting and brandishing their weapons threateningly. But there are many more defenders than attackers. Had the Vikings caught the Irish in their beds, as they had hoped, they might have massacred the whole village. As it is, the Irish quickly overwhelm the Vikings, splitting their thin ranks and slaying them one by one, including Torfinn the Terrible, who is the last to fall.

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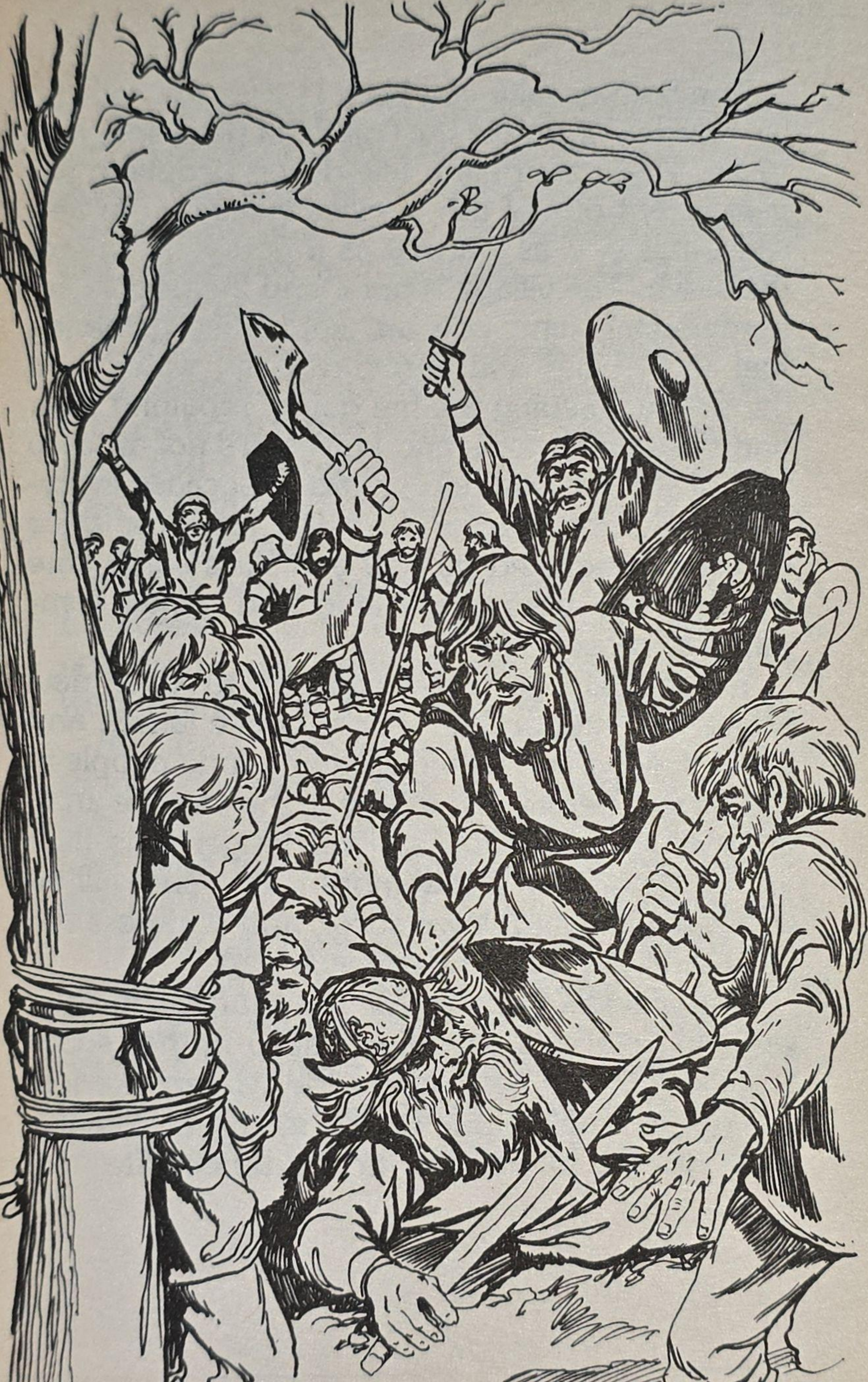
*Turn to page 14.*



The hunters take you back to their tiny village, a collection of simple huts made of peat, sod, and sticks. There are only a few dozen people in the village, but one of the families takes you in and welcomes you as warmly as if you were one of their own. The village is poor, and the people are hardworking, and you are kept busy gathering fuel and berries and herbs, carrying water from the spring, keeping the fire going, repairing huts, and sharpening tools and knives. It's not an easy way of life, but you don't mind it, because everyone works together, and for the first time since you were abducted by Kalf you have some time for fun. The people are kind and gentle compared to most Vikings.

You quickly grow accustomed to your new home. You are fond of your adoptive family, and you get along well with the other young people in the village. Before you realize it, the days begin to grow shorter, and the sun no longer sails high above the hills. In a few months the land will be covered with windblown snow, and darkness will last for all but a few hours each day.

The villagers prepare for the journey to their wintering place, a sheltered valley farther south and close to the sea, where the winters are less severe. You help your family in these preparations, looking forward to the milder climate.

---

*Turn to page 84.*

You wake with a start several hours later. Kalf, his warriors, and the other slaves are all snoring away. You strap on a pack containing your few possessions and some provisions, tiptoe away from the camp, and start looking for the trail Ingvar told you about.

You've gone only a few yards when the moon goes behind a cloud. In the darkness you step on a fallen branch that snaps with a loud crack. You think you hear voices back at the camp, and you start running through the woods, trying to get as far away as possible.

After a while you stop to listen. All is silent in the forest. You have escaped from Kalf, but in your panic you paid no attention to where you were running, and now you're hopelessly lost.

As you're wondering what to do next, the moon comes out again, and you see what looks like open land between the trees on your right. You head toward it, and in a few minutes you emerge from the forest onto a hilly, rocky plain.

The clouds have passed, but the moon is low in the sky, and soon it will be dark again. You decide that there's no use trying to go any farther until daylight. You make a bed of spruce needles in the shelter of some great rocks at the edge of the forest, lie down, and fall asleep almost instantly.

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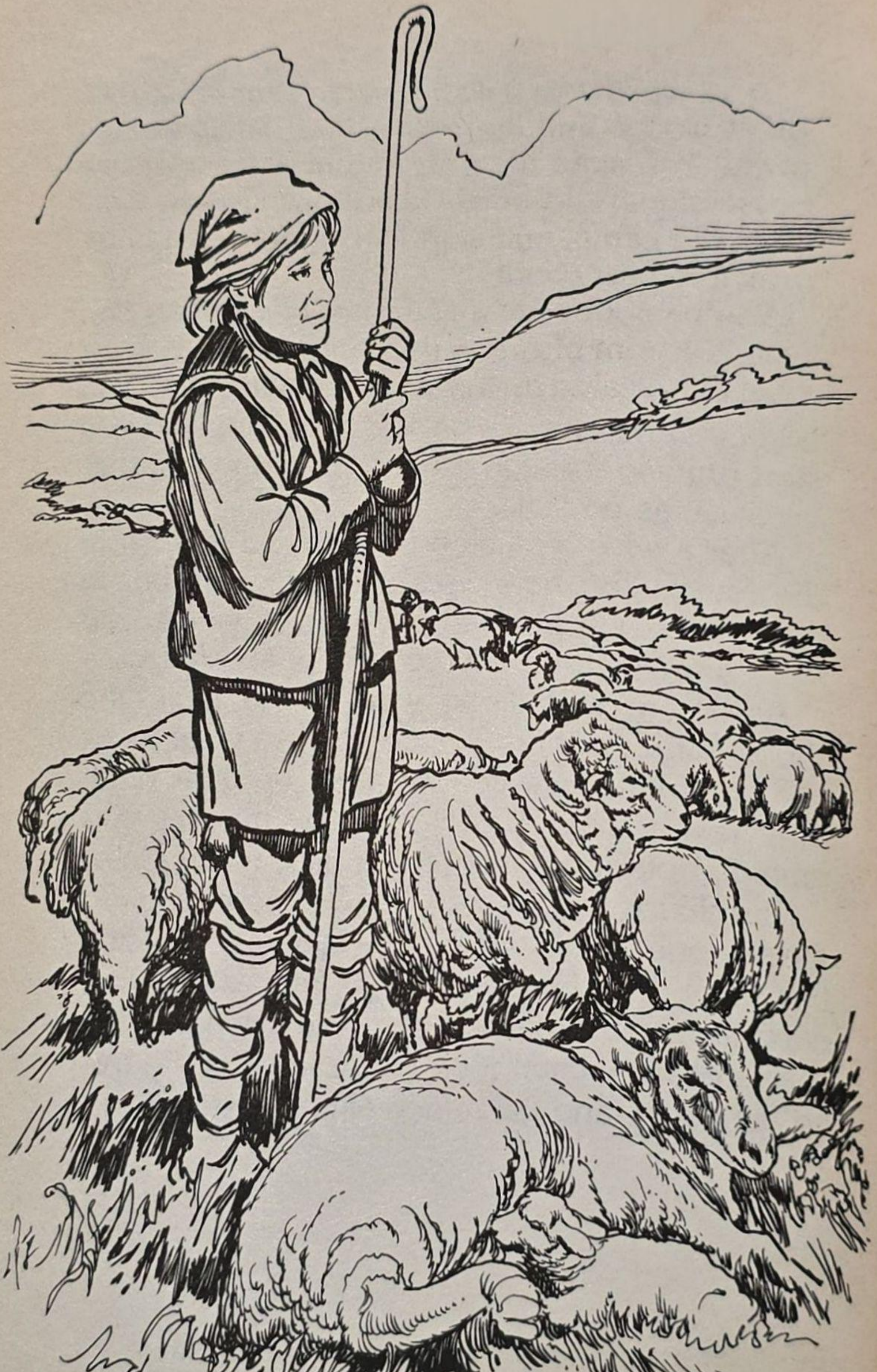
*Turn to page 39.*



You, Leif, and Harald are sent to villages far away from each other. You are given a rude hut to live in, and from then on you are no longer a builder of ships but a shepherd, working all day and getting barely enough food to survive.

You never learn what happened to Harald, but months later you hear that Leif escaped on a boat to the kingdom of Norway. You wonder whether he will ever realize his dream of crossing the great ocean.

**The End**

"I have heard tales of a rich land that lies to the west called Iceland," Torfinn says. "There is good grazing land there and fine fish that practically leap into a ship. And far beyond Iceland there is another land, which as yet has no name, and this land is greater and richer than all the others put together."

For a moment Torfinn appears to have forgotten that you are there. But then he suddenly turns and stares into your eyes. "I have heard also," he says, "that beyond Iceland fierce gales blow and mountains of ice float on the sea. I want to take the *Osprey* to Iceland, but more than that I want to discover the lands beyond it. You know this ship better than anyone. Dare I risk trying to take it across the great ocean, or should I voyage only to Iceland?"

You believe the *Osprey* to be as sound and seaworthy as a boat can be, but in a fierce gale in unknown waters, who can say what would happen? Still, the idea of crossing the ocean appeals to you. If you could reach another land, perhaps you could escape from Torfinn and build a new life.

---

*If you advise Torfinn to cross the ocean,*
*turn to page 80.*

*If you advise him to voyage to Iceland,*
*turn to page 69.*

Later the same evening another man, as rich and powerful as Horik, visits you. His name is Egil, and he owns a fleet of twelve fishing boats in a village fifty miles to the south.

"You have learned much about the boats my men sail," Egil says. "We have heard rumors about great fishing grounds near an island off the coast. We are about to set out in search of them, and I would like you to join my crew. You would not have to row but could work the sail and help keep our gear mended."

"I don't know," you say, thinking about Horik's offer.

"Understand this, my young friend," Egil says. "The great fishing grounds are worth more than gold to our people. If we are successful, you will be richly rewarded."

You thank Egil for the offer and promise that you'll let him know the next day whether you will accompany him on his search for the great fishing grounds.

That night you lie awake, trying to decide what to do.

---

*If you join Egil's crew, turn to page 103.*

*If you accept the job as Horik's chief boat builder, turn to page 46.*

It's a horrible sight. Nevertheless you are relieved at the outcome. Had the Vikings prevailed, your life wouldn't have been worth a copper coin.

After the battle is over, the Irish come over to where you are tied. The way they are glaring at you tells you that you're still in danger. The villagers argue loudly among themselves. Finally, one who speaks your language and who appears to be the leader of the village steps forward.

"Some of us think you saved our lives and should have our thanks," he says. "Others say you were a spy who was caught just in time, and you should be hung."

"I was not a spy," you say. "I was a slave. I snuck away from my cruel and murderous master and ran to warn your people."

The man nods. "So you say. But now you must stand trial by ordeal to see whether you're telling the truth."

You shudder when you hear this. You have heard of "trial by ordeal." The accused is forced to pick up a hot coal. If it burns his hand, it means he's guilty. If not, he's innocent. You've heard that this method works, but you'd rather not have to test it. You've got to do some fast thinking if you're going to avoid it, though.

---

*If you continue to explain why you couldn't be a spy, turn to page 108.*

*If you suggest asking the shepherd boys who first saw you what they think, turn to page 109.*

Egil tells you and Svein to sit in the bow and be lookouts.

"If you see fish jumping, give a yell," he says. "That will be a sign we've found what we're looking for. And mind you, keep an eye out for waves breaking in the middle of the sea. If you see one, there's probably a rock under it, and we must steer well away."

For two days you and Svein keep watch. Once you see the spouts of whales in the distance, but you see no fish jumping or waves breaking over rocks.

On the third morning, when you wake up, the ship is hardly moving. Fog has enshrouded it so thickly you can hardly see the stern from the bow.

"Make as little sound with your oars as you can," Egil orders the rowers. "In a fog like this, we must see with our ears."

A moment later Svein calls, "Father, I hear a sound like breaking waves on a beach—that way." He points off to the right.

Egil listens for a moment, then nods. "You're right, son," he says. "We must learn what land lies there so we can mark it on our charts, but I don't dare take our ship in among the rocks that lie along it." He points to you. "You and Svein must row the small boat toward the sound to make sure there's land there and not just a reef. While you're gone, we'll sound a ram's horn every few minutes so you can find your way back to us in the fog."

---

*Turn to page 33.*

Finally you discover an opening to a cave on the northern side of the spire. You step inside and look around. There's no sign that anyone has been living there.

Discouraged, you leave the dank cave and quickly survey the rest of the area. You find a spring to drink from. You still have some food left, but it seems you've come all this way for nothing.

A chill wind comes up. Exhausted and shivering, you crawl into your bearskin and go to sleep.

As you sleep, you dream. In your dream you meet the holy man. He takes you to the kingdom of Odin, the chief Viking god. Odin's land seems like the kingdom of Norway itself, with pine-forested mountains, glistening glaciers, rushing rivers, and sparkling lakes.

In this land you see mighty Thor, son of Odin, hurling his lightning bolt from his palace. The bolt flashes across the sky. It strikes you full force, but you're not dead—instead, you're sitting up! The whole sky is alive with flickering, dancing lights—blue and rose and orange lights, shimmering across the sky.

Suddenly you realize you're not dreaming. You're awake. Yet the sky is still flickering with unearthly light.

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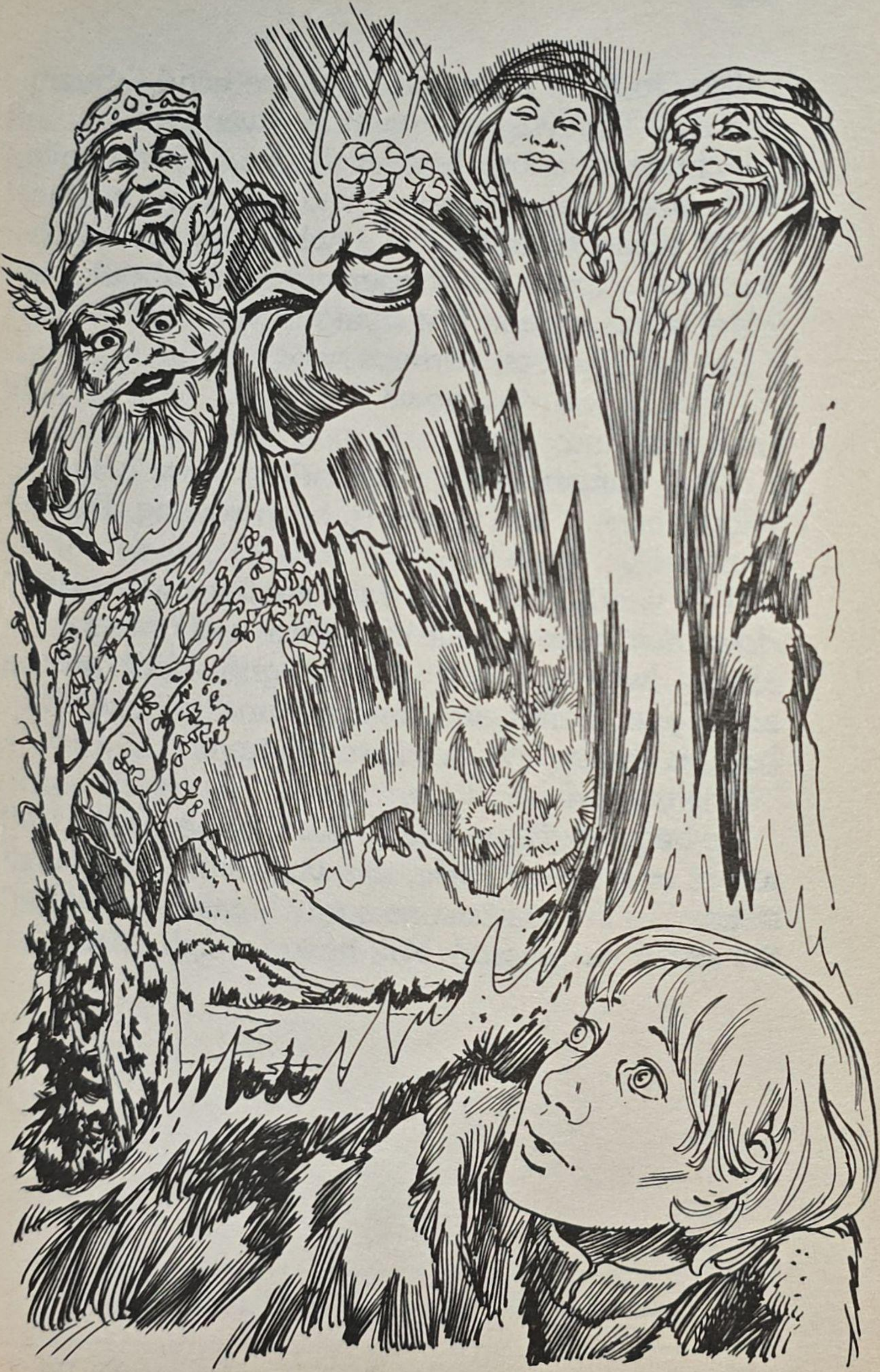
*Turn to page 41.*



"Try to keep us headed into the wind," Svein shouts. "That way we won't be swamped."

A huge wave breaks over the boat. Svein bails with quick, jerky motions. You pull hard on the oars, trying to keep the rowboat headed into the wind. You're no longer worrying about the Maelstrom—you're just trying to survive!

An hour passes, perhaps two.

"Could you row now? I'm tired," you shout over the wind.

"Too dangerous to switch right now," Svein shouts back. "You've got to keep rowing. Don't give up!"

The wind roars. The rain continues to pour down in sheets. A wave catches one of your oars, almost twisting it out of your grip. Your arms ache, your hands are blistered, and your whole body is shaking with chill and fatigue.

Still you keep rowing.

It's beginning to get light again in the northeast when, as if by a miracle, the wind eases, the rain stops, and the sea becomes much calmer. Finally the storm has passed. You heave a sigh of relief.

---

*Turn to page 34.*

You and Svein stare at each other. You know that you're both thinking the same thing—you're lost, drifting aimlessly somewhere off the coast of Norway.

Svein takes over at the oars. There's hardly any wind, and the sea is quite calm, but there's no point in his rowing. Neither of you knows which way land is. You'll just have to wait until the fog lifts.

About an hour later the fog begins to burn off—you can see the sun shining faintly through the mist.

"We've got to start rowing, Svein," you say. "Otherwise we'll just sit here."

"I agree," he says. "But I'm not sure which way land is. What do you think?"

"I'm not sure either," you say. You wonder if you could navigate by the sun. You guess that it's about noon, so the sun must be in the south. At the moment your boat is heading directly toward the sun. Therefore, if you turn right, you'll be heading west, and if you turn left, you'll be heading east.

---

*If you decide to turn right, turn to page 72.*

*If you decide to turn left, turn to page 42.*

"It's very beautiful here," you say to your old friend thoughtfully, looking around again at the little mountaintop plateau. "But I don't think I want to stay here and live as you do."

"And you shouldn't," Ingvar says. "I came here to spend my last days, but you are young. There is much for you to do in the world." He reaches under his robe, pulls out a beautiful ruby-colored stone affixed to a thin gold chain, and hands it to you.

"I shouldn't take this," you say. "It must be precious to you."

"Take it," says Ingvar, "for there are many such stones on this mountain. But never tell where it came from."

"Thank you, Ingvar," you say, taking it and hanging it around your neck. "I shall never part with it, and I shall always remember you."

He nods. "Rest here for tonight. Tomorrow you may safely leave."

"But where will I go?"

"Wherever your heart takes you," Ingvar says. "For this charm will bring you good fortune for the rest of your life."

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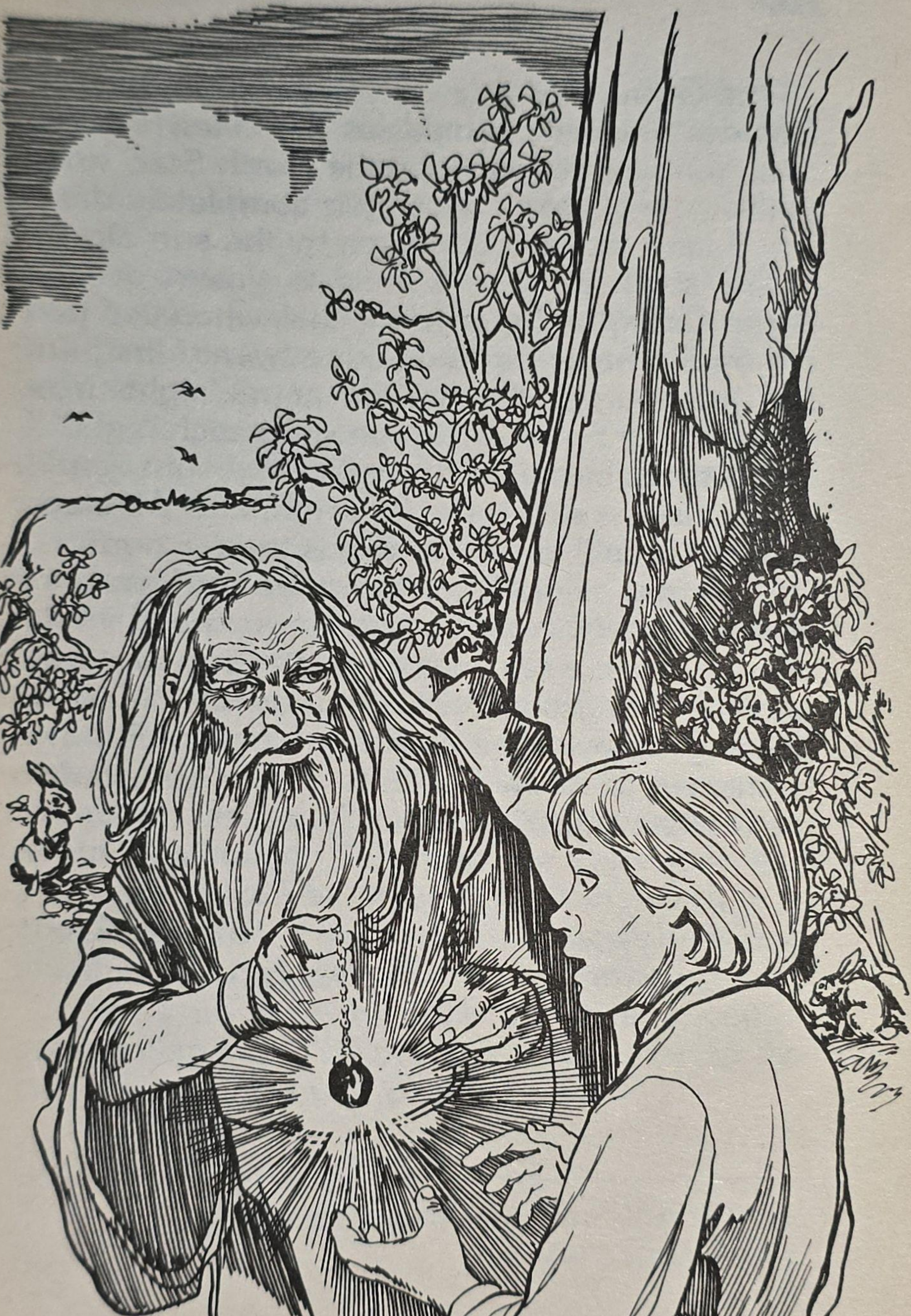
*Turn to page 75.*



The *Osprey* has a crude compass, but at high latitudes magnetic compasses are often inaccurate. You can't navigate by the North Star, since at this time of year it never gets completely dark. You'll have to set your course by the sun alone.

The south coast of Iceland is almost on the Arctic Circle, and you know that wherever you are on the Arctic Circle on June twenty-first, the sun just touches the horizon at midnight. You watch to see how low the sun sinks each night. If it dips much below the horizon at midnight, you'll know that the ship is too far south, and if it stays above it, you'll know the ship is too far north.

Using this method, you direct the helmsman to steer more to the right or left as you head westward across the sea. Five days later you discover another navigational aid—hundreds of birds flocking above the horizon. You tell the helmsman to follow the birds. A few hours later the lookout yells, "Land ho!"

---

*Turn to page 105.*

Svein stands up in the boat and shields his eyes. "The water looks kind of weird beyond this island," he says. "There are all kinds of little ripples on it. The tide must be moving even faster there."

Your boat is approaching the island rapidly. You hardly have to row at all—the current is doing most of your work for you. In a couple of minutes you'll pass the island's north point.

"This is great," you say to Svein. "That current will take us toward the mainland much faster than we could row."

But your friend looks worried. "It might take us *too* fast. I've heard stories about these northern tides. Maybe we should land on this island and wait until the tide slackens."

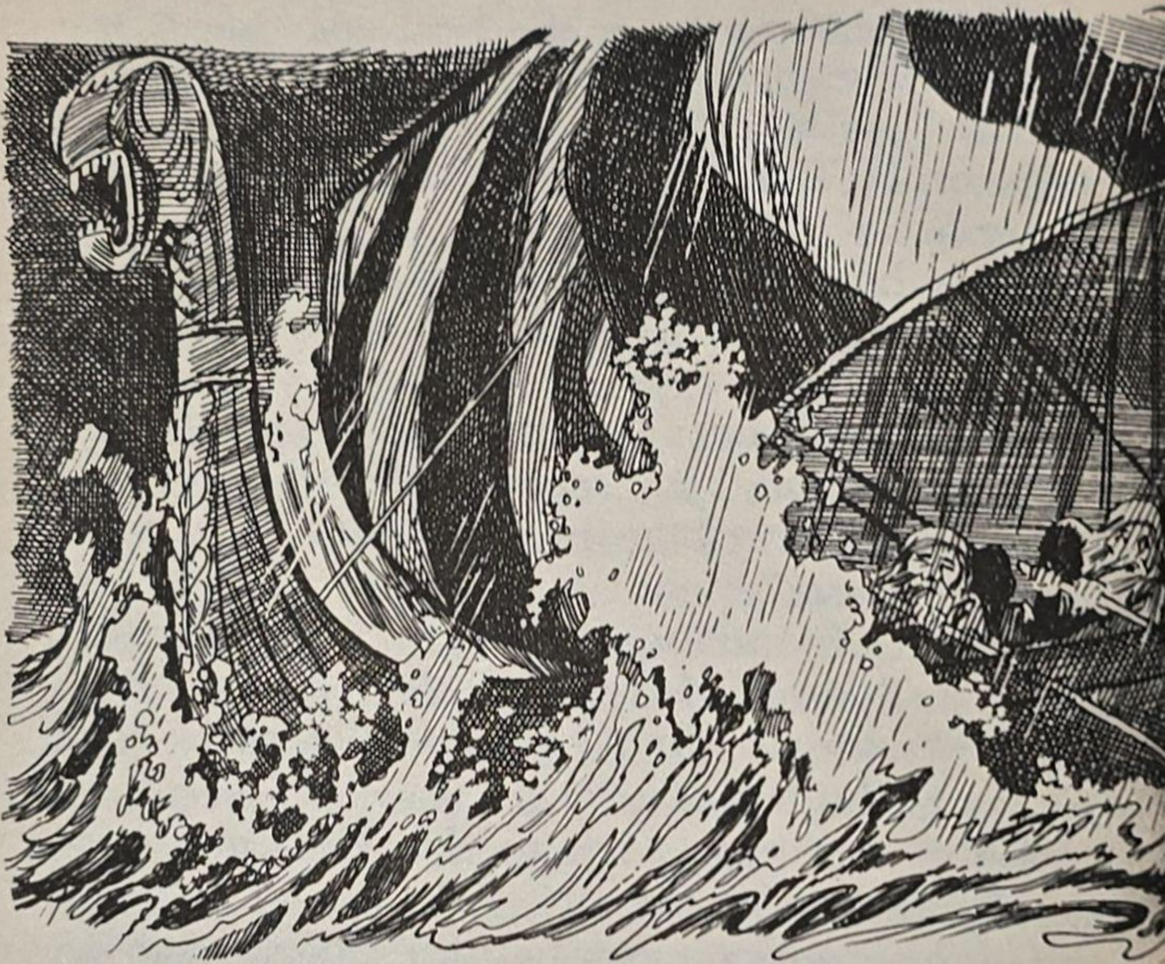
You're not sure what to do. The current is awfully fast, and the water does look strange ahead. You're not sure what stories Svein is talking about, but he seems to be very apprehensive about continuing. Still, with the current taking you, you should be able to reach the coast in a couple of hours. If you wait, who knows how long it will take—especially if a storm comes up.

There's no time to think about it. If you're going to land, you'll have to row hard now, or the current will carry you past the point.

---

*If you decide to ride with the current,*
*turn to page 61.*

*If you decide to land on the island,*
*turn to page 28.*

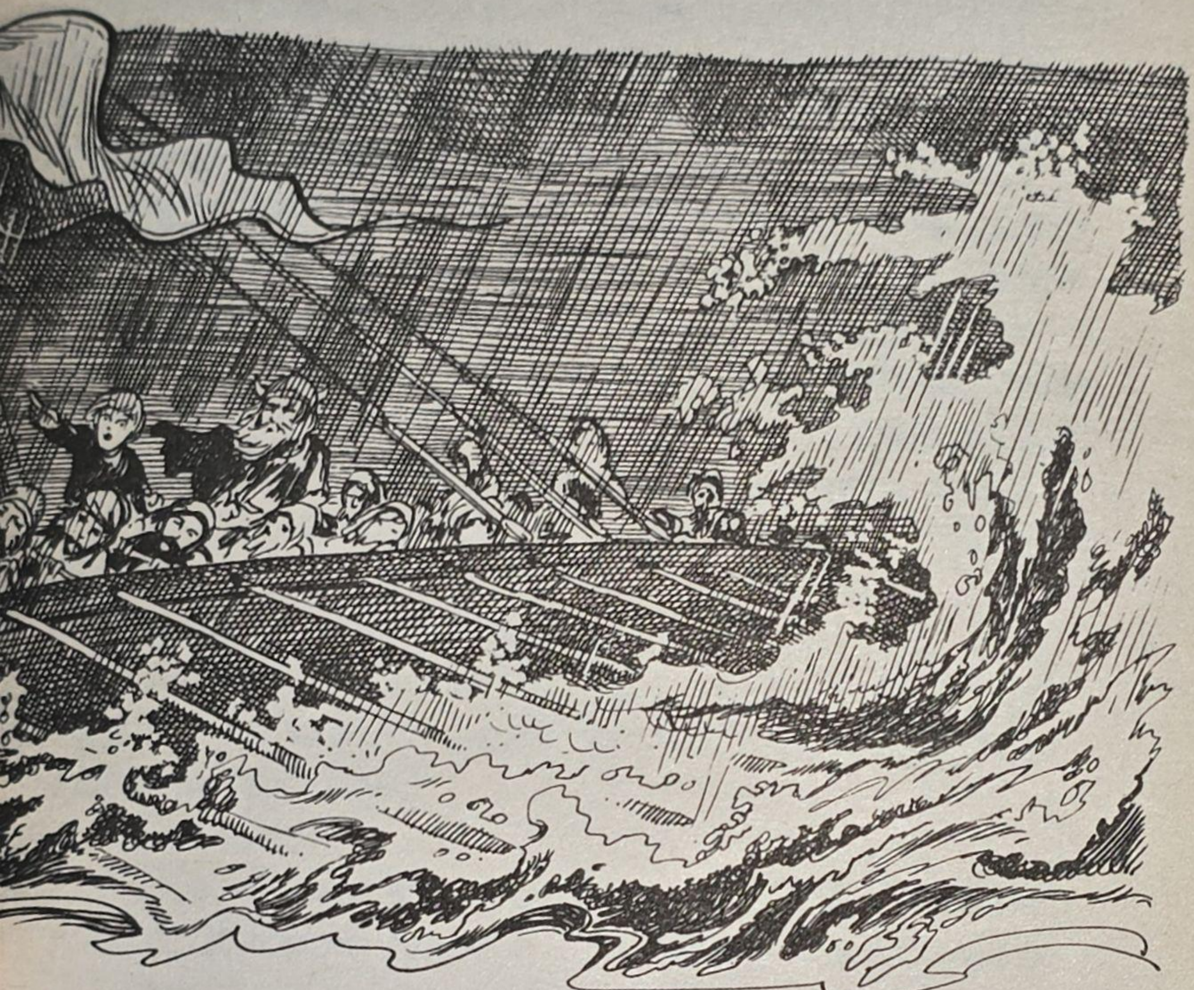


"Move your weight, men!" Torfinn shouts above the howling of the wind. "Keep to the high side, or we'll be over."

"Take the sail down," you shout. "There's too much wind for it."

It's up to Torfinn to give the orders, not you, and he shoots you a fierce look and half rises as if to strike you. But then another large wave strikes the ship. Spray and foam blast into your face as water pours over the rail. A line breaks loose, and the sail flaps wildly in the wind.

"Get the sail down!" Torfinn bellows.



The men struggle to pull the sail into the ship. At last it is safely lowered and furled. The ship rides more easily for a moment. But the gale is growing fiercer. Great breaking waves crash aboard. Torfinn, bracing himself, shouts at the crew, but the wind drowns out his voice.

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*Go on to the next page.*

The men know what to do, however. Half of them bail, and the other half stay at the oars, trying to keep the ship headed into the wind.

The storm rages on. The timbers creak and groan as if the ship will split in two. Then a great wave, larger than any that has come before, crashes aboard. It sweeps a small boat and two men over the side. They are quickly out of sight, lost forever.

A few minutes later there's a lull in the wind.

---

*Turn to page 83.*

You stop rowing for a moment, and when you do, you hear a low-pitched sound, like a muffled roar, off to the left. The current is bearing you toward the sound. You row as hard as you can, trying to fight the current, but it's moving so fast that your efforts seem useless.

The waves have calmed down a little, but the part of the sea that you're in seems almost slanted, as if the water were moving around a circular track.

Svein carefully stands up in the boat and looks ahead.

"Svein, what's happening?" you cry.

When he sits down, his face is pale. "I've heard of this," he says. "I never thought I would see it at such close range."

"See what?"

"The Maelstrom—the greatest whirlpool in the world. It forms twice a day, when the incoming tide reaches its greatest strength."

You stand up to see for yourself. Though the boat is heeled slightly, it seems strangely stable, as if glued to a track.

The roars grows louder. You quickly sit down. Faster still, the boat begins to move in a circle, getting closer and closer to the center of the whirlpool.

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*Turn to page 92.*

You decide to land on the island. Svein's nervousness has rubbed off on you. You realize you don't like the idea of being caught in a powerful current when you can't be sure where it will take you. You row as hard as you can, trying to reach the island before the current carries the boat past it.

In a few minutes you're out of the strong current. There's a light surf washing up on the shore of the island, and in another minute the boat is in it. You and Svein jump out and pull your craft up onto the gravelly beach.

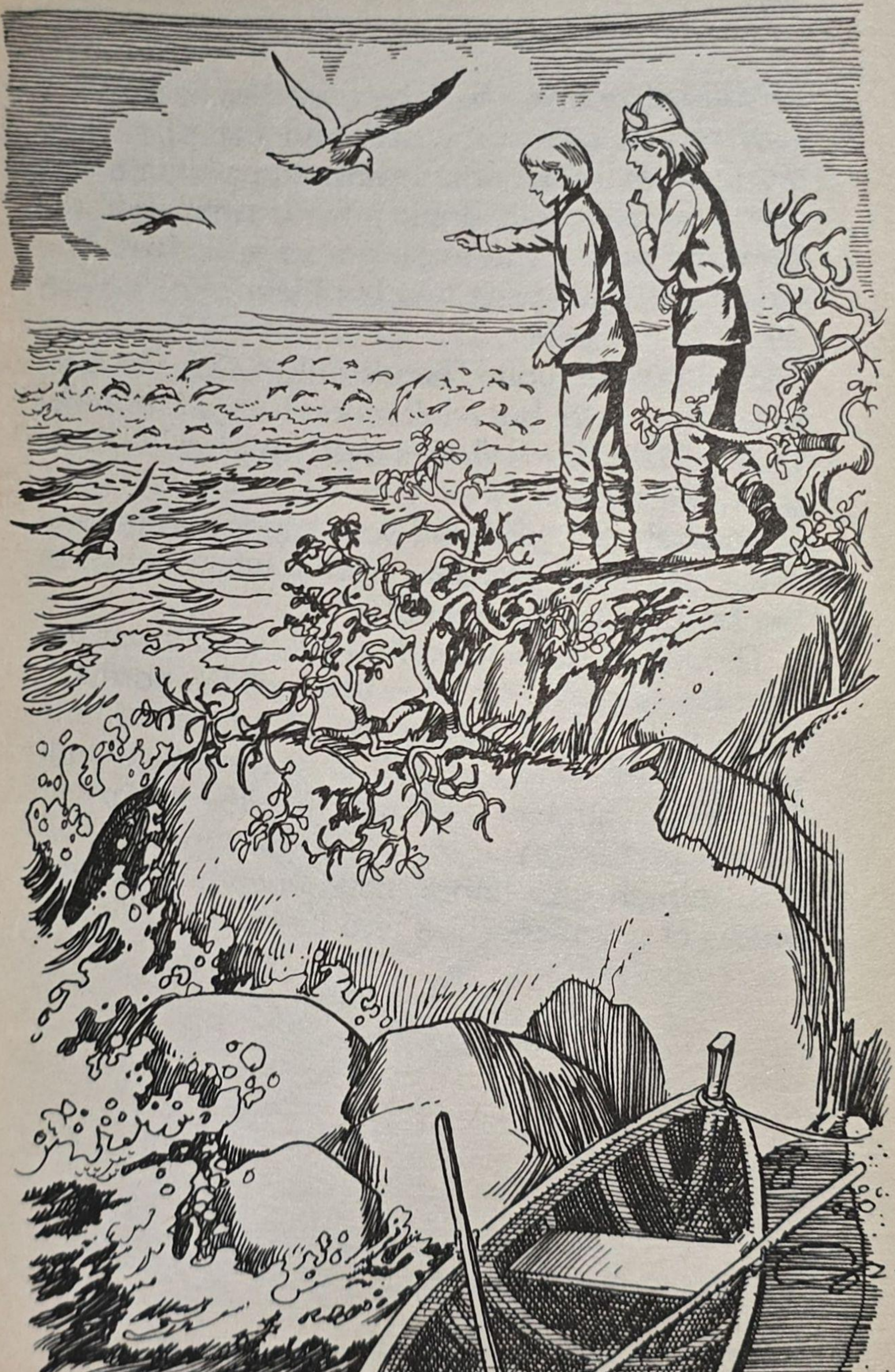
Svein wanders around, probing among some rocks along the shoreline. "Mussels," he calls to you. "We can make a meal of them."

In the meantime, you've climbed up on a large boulder. From this vantage point you can see that the island is only a few dozen yards across. Except for a few grassy areas and some half-withered shrubs, it consists of nothing but rocks and sand.

You keep climbing until you're standing atop the highest rock on the island. From here you can see in all directions. First, you look to the west. The sea is churned up—not by the wind or the tide, but by fish! You can see hundreds of big ones jumping out of the water every minute.

"The great fishing grounds!" you yell down to Svein. "They're right off this island!"

*Turn to page 52.*



You follow Svein back down to the beach. The two of you gather mussels and eat them raw. Svein finds a pool of rainwater trapped in a hollow, and you both drink from it until you can drink no more. Then you go up and sleep in a sandy patch between two boulders.

Svein wakes you. There's only a little daylight left in the north, but a full moon hangs low in the south. "The tide is slackening," he says. "We've got to hurry."

You help him push the boat into the water and shove off. Then you start rowing while he sits in the bow, acting as lookout.

Though it's running more slowly than it was before, the current soon takes you past the northern point of the island. The water all around is now calm and glassy as the boat moves swiftly along. The great whirlpool you saw from the rocky isle has disappeared. You can't even be sure where it was, though you know that beneath it lie the wrecks of countless ships and boats.

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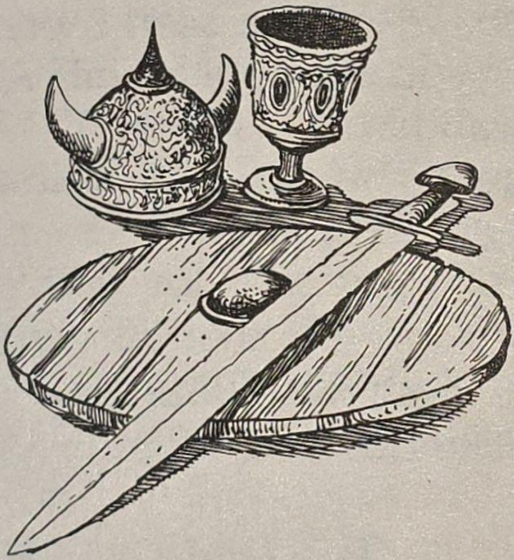
*Turn to page 106.*

"Torfinn would catch up with you wherever you went," Horik says. "Even now his warriors are marching toward our village. He kills anyone who incurs his wrath. You would be wiser to stay here and try to gain his favor. Someday you may have a chance to escape, but I advise you not to try now. The time of ice and darkness is at hand, and the wolves are numerous and hungry this year."

Horik is right—trying to escape would be risky. Still, you remember the words of your old friend Ingvar: "It's better to risk death than to live life as a slave."



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*If you stay put, turn to page 62.*

*If you try to escape before Torfinn arrives, turn to page 51.*

## 32

"Cross the ocean?" Gudrod roars incredulously. "No one dares to mention such an idea. How do we know that the ocean is not endless? Your ship could drop off the edge! Think well before you press this more upon me."

But Leif waits barely a second before replying. "If the ocean ended, there would be a current running west that would empty the sea and everything on it," he says. "I've sailed enough to know that this is not so. I know as well as I know the sea has salt in it that there is land on the other side. I will find it, Gudrod. I will bring our ship safely back, and bring glory on us all."

"You have already proven yourself, Leif," Gudrod says. "I am of a mind to help you reach this goal." He turns to you and Harald. "But what about you two, who have seen more of the sea than most? Do you agree with Leif? Are you prepared to go with him?"

"I am as ready to go with Leif as I am to breathe and eat," says Harald.

"And I, too," you say, for you have heard many tales about lands that lie across the sea. What could be more wonderful than to sail with a great seaman like Leif and discover a new world?

**The End**

With your heart in your throat, you set out with Svein in the tiny boat, rowing toward the sound of the breaking waves. Soon the ship is out of sight in the fog. For a moment you feel frightened and alone, but then you hear the long, mournful note of the ram's horn carrying over the water, and you feel reassured.

The sound of the breaking waves grows louder.

"We must be getting closer to the island," you say.

"I hope it's not just a reef," Svein says.

You keep rowing, but instead of getting louder, the sound begins to get softer. You seem to be moving too far to the left of the breaking waves. You change the heading of the rowboat, but the sound continues to get fainter.

You hear the ram's horn again through the fog, but it, too, sounds faint and faraway.

"What's happening?" you say.

"We must be caught in a strong current," Svein says. "We've got to fight it or it will carry us too far from the ship."

You pull on the oars as hard as you can. However, you soon realize that the wind and waves have turned the boat partway around, and you're not sure which direction you're heading in. You stop rowing. Svein starts to speak, but you hold your fingers over your lips.

"Shhh!"

The two of you strain your ears, listening for the breaking waves or the ram's horn, but you hear nothing.

---

*Turn to page 19.*

You and Svein look around, and in the early morning light you spot an island, this one much larger than the rocky islet where you set foot before.

"Let's land there," Svein says wearily.

You've already turned the boat, and with aching arms and blistered hands you pull again on the oars. It takes your last bit of strength to bring the boat onto the beach. Svein helps you pull it above the tidemark. Then you both collapse, exhausted, on the sand.

You awake about midday and rouse Svein. Then the two of you set out to explore the island. You climb up the side of a rocky ridge. About halfway to the top you pass the entrance to a cave. For some reason you feel drawn to it. You take a step closer, then stop and stare inside.

Svein has continued climbing and has reached the top of the ridge.

"Come on up," he calls to you. "There's a fishing boat anchored in a cove on the other side of the island. If we hurry, we can signal them. We're practically saved!"

You take a step to follow him, but then you turn again to look at the cave entrance.

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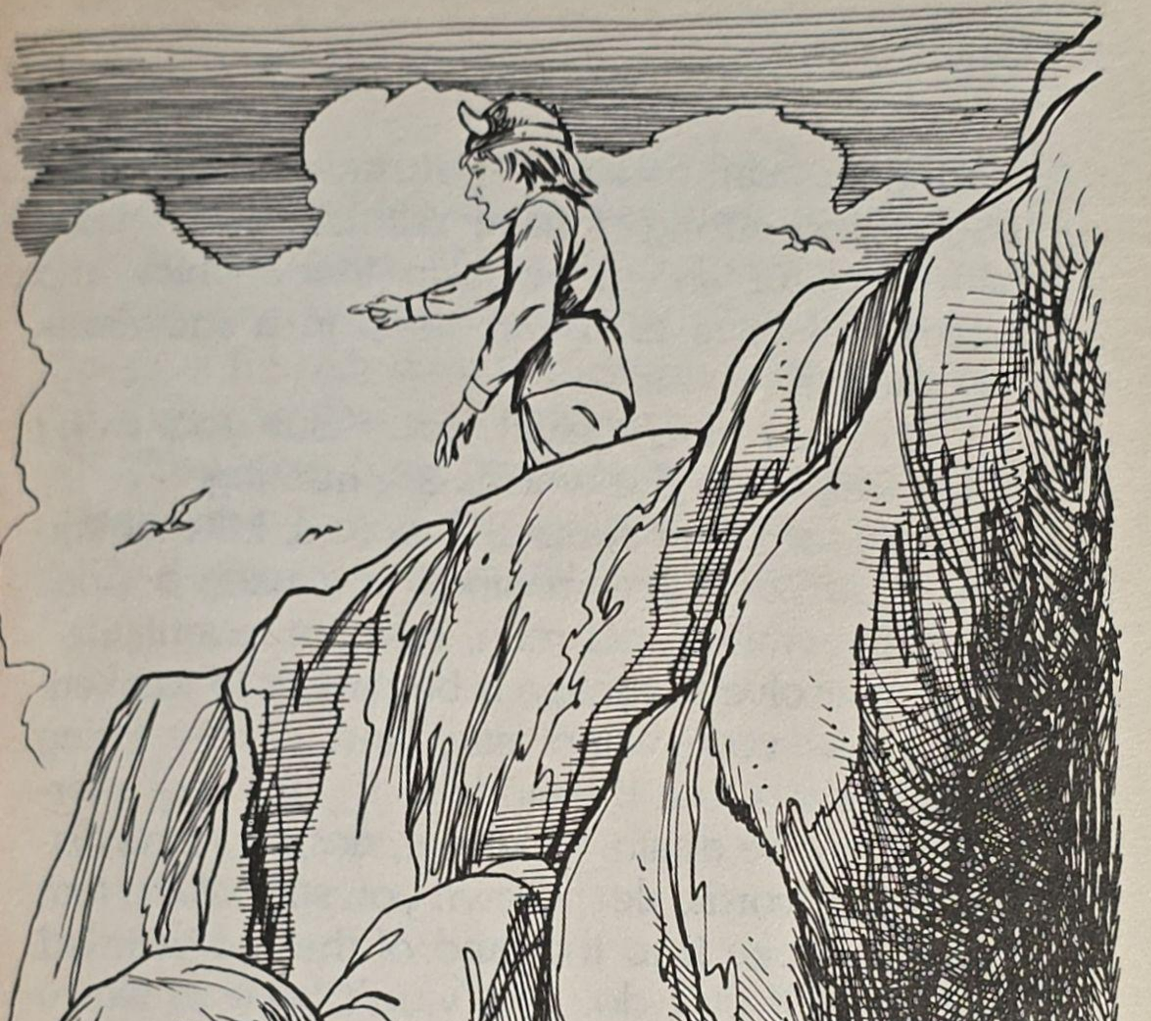
*If you tell Svein to wait while you take a look in the cave, turn to page 54.*

*If you forget about the cave and follow Svein, turn to page 44.*



"I think I can make it," you say to Aun. "I am young and strong. I have reindeer boots lined with lynx fur and a bearskin that is thick and warm. If I have to, I can sleep in a snowbank wrapped in my fur."

"Yes, you can," says Aun. "But you won't sleep well when the wolves are hunting."

You'd forgotten about the wolves. Like all Vikings, you have known since you were a small child that wolves, not men, rule the mountains.

Your resolve to escape is beginning to weaken. You know you cannot stay and endure being made a slave, but it sounds as if your only alternative may be death. However, despite Aun's discouraging words, deep down you still believe that you can make it to the land of the red-bearded men. And if you do, you won't have to worry about being made a slave ever again.

You thank Aun for his advice and turn to leave his hut, but his wife, Astrid, steps forward and stops you with an upraised hand.

"Wait a moment," she says. "There is a place where you might find refuge. And if you get there, you may learn the secrets of the gods as well."

"Where?" you ask eagerly.

*Go on to the next page.*

Astrid glances at Aun, who nods. “There is a trail north of the village that leads to the granite peak,” she says. “Near the summit is a flat area and a cave where an old man lives. He is a holy man, a hermit. If he thinks you have wisdom, he will protect you and help you.”

“You must have great courage and strength to reach the top of the granite peak,” says Aun. “And you must have wisdom as well.”

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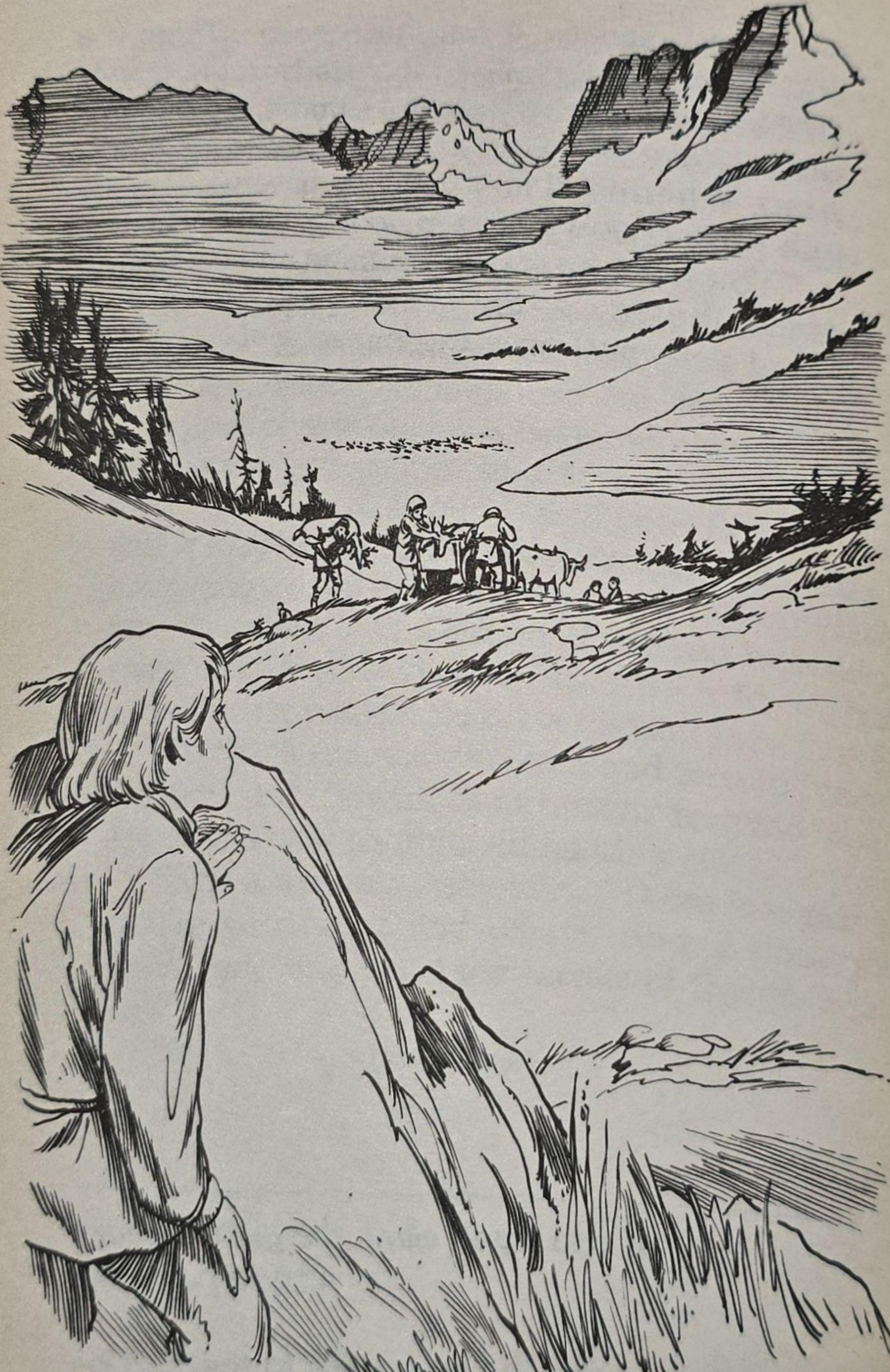
*If you try to climb the granite peak,*
*turn to page 57.*

*If you try to cross the mountains to the land of*
*the red-bearded men, turn to page 64.*



You awaken many hours later and sit up, blinking. You shield your eyes from the sun, which is just above the horizon. The air is crystal clear, without a trace of smoke or haze, and you can see for miles. Hilly country, mostly grasslands, lies ahead of you. In the distance reindeer are grazing.

You drink from a nearby spring, then climb to the top of the highest hill in the area. From this vantage point you spot a band of hunters dressed in simple garments made from animal skins. They have killed several elk and are loading them onto crude wooden carts. You know you're not likely to survive long in this wilderness on your own, so you hurry to meet them.

The hunters are amazed when you tell them that you've escaped from Kalf the Cruel. The leader nods gravely. "Kalf is no friend of ours," he says. "Come with us—hurry!"

Before you can respond, he turns and barks orders to the others. You accompany the hunters as they trudge across the hilly plain, pulling their wooden carts.

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*Turn to page 8.*

You climb over the gunwales and step onto the deck of the ship, with Svein right behind you. When you approach the tiny house, you see that it has no door. You look inside, and a shiver runs through your body. A human skeleton is laid out on the floor. Dozens of gold coins are scattered around the bones.

Svein gasps and clutches your shoulder. "It's a funeral boat," he whispers. "This must be the skeleton of a powerful chieftain."

"How did they get the boat in here?" you say.

Svein points to the far end of the cavern. "Look, there's a tunnel over there. This pond must be connected to the sea by an underground river."

The two of you jump out of the boat and walk around the edge of the pond toward the tunnel. Svein wades into the water. It only comes up to his knees.

"The tunnel is big enough for the boat to go through, but the water isn't deep enough," you say.

"The tide must come up much higher," Svein says. "It's low tide now."

You stare at your friend. "That's the answer to our problem. We can take the boat out through the tunnel ourselves."

"We'll have to," Svein says. "That's the only way out of here."

*Turn to page 60.*

If you're not dreaming, you must be dead, for you've never seen such splendor. The vision of multicolored light is so beautiful you can't take your eyes off it. You must actually have reached Odin's kingdom. You are with the gods!

You stand and take a small step forward, and then another. Before you is the cave, appearing mysterious and alive under the flickering lights. Only then do you realize that you're not dead and you're not in Odin's kingdom, but still on top of the granite peak. The stupendous sight you've been watching is the aurora borealis, the northern lights. You've seen them before as faint flickerings in the sky, but never in as magnificent a display as this. Surely it's as glorious as the land of the gods itself.

Another great flash illuminates the cave, and in that instant you stare into the wrinkled blue eyes of an elderly hermit. You recognize him at once. It's Ingvar, the wise old man who befriended you in the village of Kalf the Cruel. You've found his secret hiding place!

"Ingvar! I thought I was in Odin's kingdom," you say.

"Not quite," he says. "But as close to it as any place on Earth. That is why I came here to spend my last days."

"It's beautiful here, but how do you get enough food to survive?"

"The springs of the gods flow on this mountain," he says. "Not with water, but with a nectar more nourishing than any food."

---

*Turn to page 20.*

You decide to turn left and head east. You and Svein take turns rowing. Although the fog has lifted a little, you still can't see more than half a mile ahead. The sun remains faintly visible through the mist, however, so you're able to keep on course.

A few hours later, while Svein is rowing, a fresh breeze blows in, and the fog finally lifts. The majestic coast of Norway suddenly stands out before you. The nearest land, a mountain slope that descends into the sea, is barely a mile away! A thin plume of smoke is rising from behind a ridge, probably from a campfire.

You give a shout of relief, but Svein has a worried look on his face. He stops rowing and scans the coastline.

"I once voyaged with my father past this headland," he says. "There's a harbor with calm waters to the right of that point. But this is the land of Torfinn the Terrible—the fiercest of the Viking raiders. From what I've heard of him, he'd take our boat and slay us and think nothing of it."

Even as Svein is talking, the wind seems to have doubled in force. Waves are building up, and you brace yourself as one strikes the boat.

"We'd better head for shore," you say.

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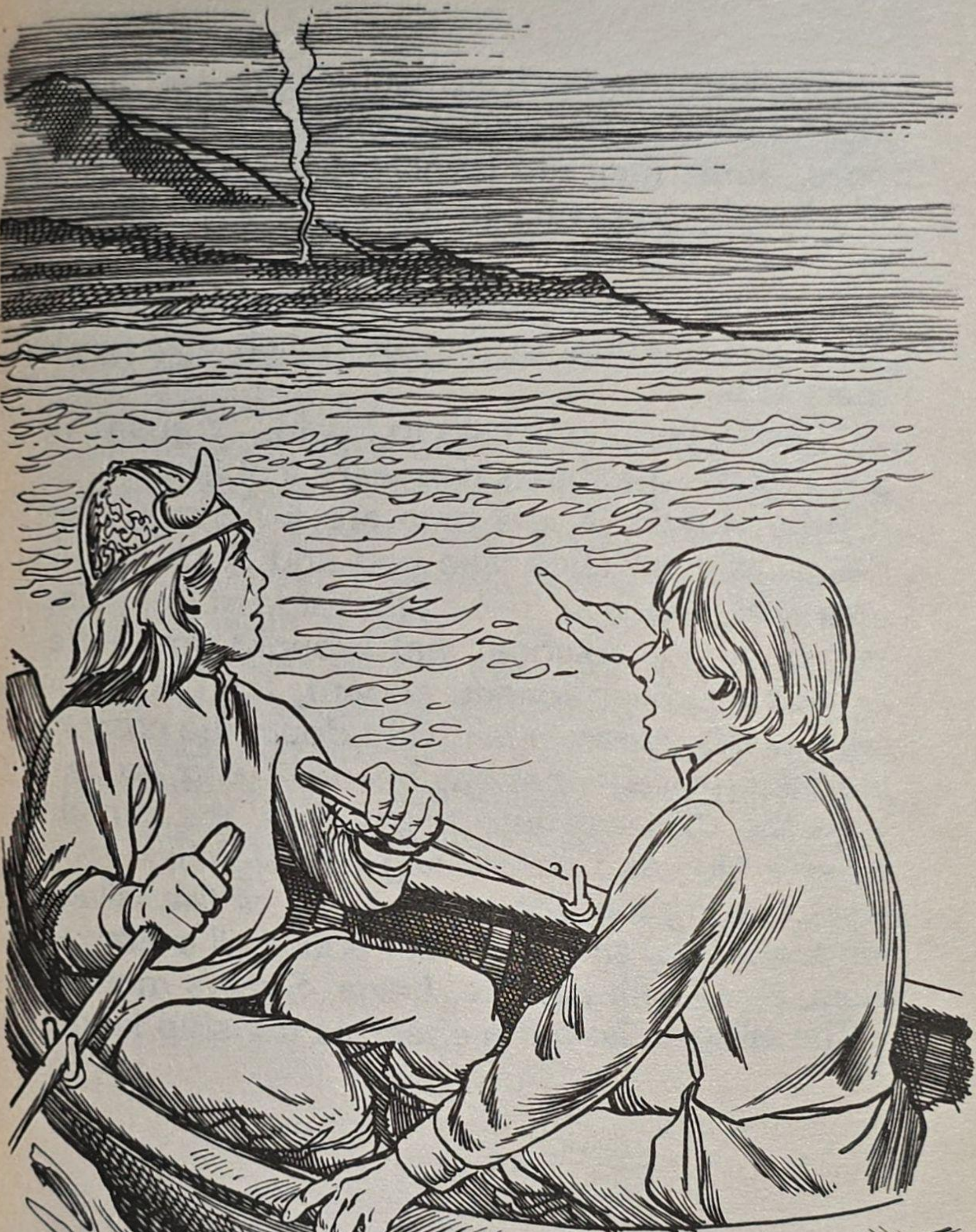
*Turn to page 5.*



You hurry to catch up with Svein and follow close behind as he races down the hill toward the cove. Some men are launching a small boat off the beach, preparing to return to a larger ship anchored offshore.

The men look up in surprise at Svein's shouts. They pull the boat up on the beach and run to meet you.

"I know you," one calls to Svein. "You are the son of Egil—he thinks you were lost at sea."

It turns out that the men are fishermen from Svein's village. They take you and Svein out to their ship, then row to the other side of the island to pick up the rowboat that brought you there. Once it has been loaded aboard, they hoist the sail and ride before a fair wind down the coast to the fishing village that has become your home.

As the ship sails into the harbor, the captain raises a blue and yellow flag that signifies good news. Seeing the flag, the people of the village run toward the shore to meet you. Egil is among them, along with his wife, Itelga, Svein's mother.

The villagers let out a cheer as the ship lands.

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*Turn to page 110.*

The shepherd boys look at you with astonishment as you run toward them, waving your arms wildly.

"Danger!" you yell. "The Vikings are coming to attack your village!"

One of the boys drops his staff and races toward the village. You run after him and arrive right behind him.

Some men come out and seize you. They start questioning you, but they can't understand you, and you can't understand them. You try desperately to communicate that they are in danger, but they just stare at you, perplexed.

By this time almost everyone in the village is gathered around you. Suddenly a woman shouts. She's pointing up toward the hill. The Viking warriors are racing down it. Each holds a shield in one hand and a hatchet or spear in the other.

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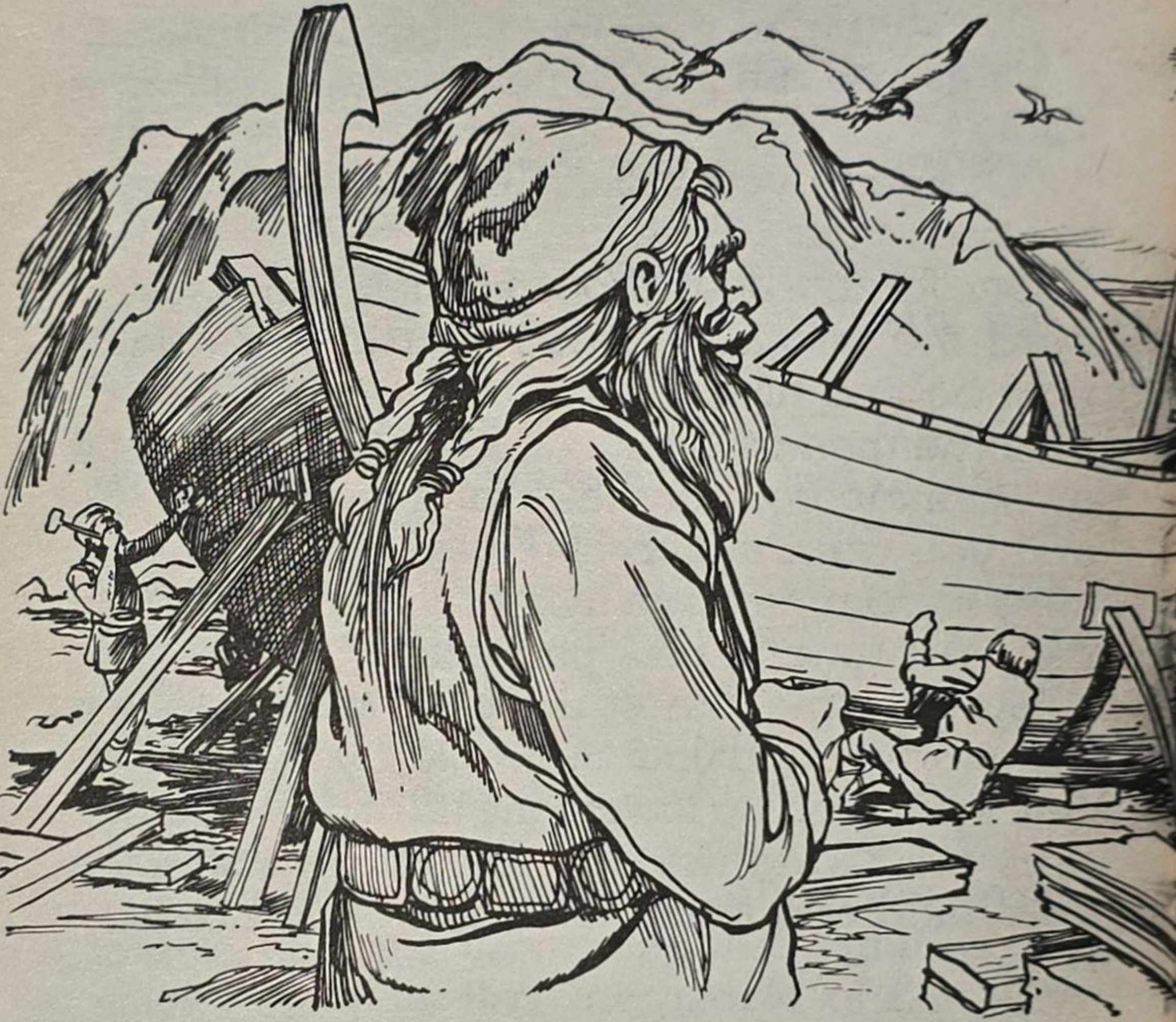
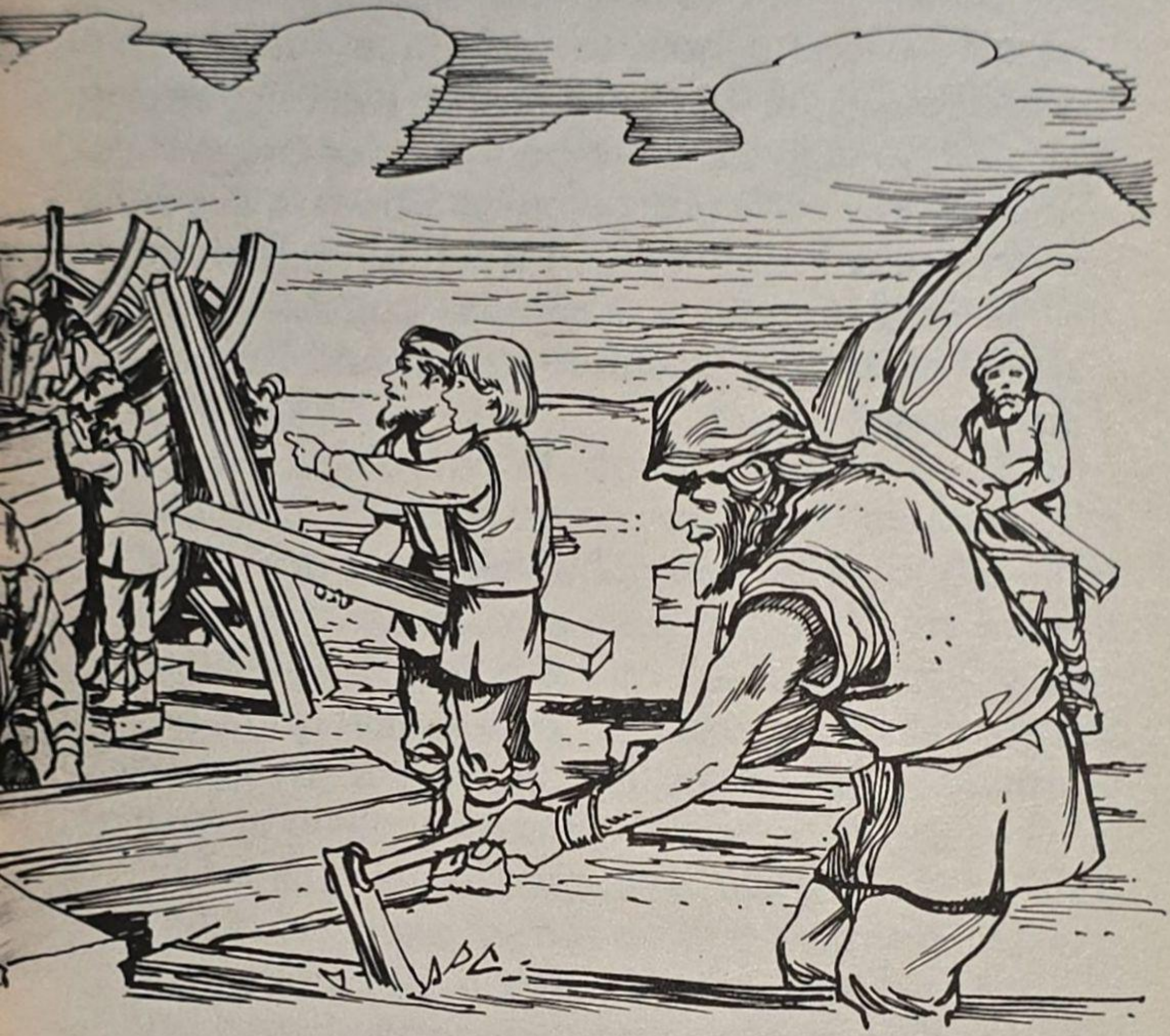
*Turn to page 6.*



You go to work in the village of Gotstad as Horik's chief boat builder. Horik teaches you everything there is to know about the art of boat building. You learn how to cut wood with simple tools, how to grind and file planks until they are smooth and straight, how to fasten planks with dowels, with one board overlapping the next as the hull is built up, and how to go into the woods and search for a straight oak, clean and free from insects or blight, which you can cut and fashion into a mast.



You learn how to build braces in the boat so the mast will be strongly supported, how to rig ropes, and how to make pulleys and winches so the sail can be raised and lowered and trimmed.

*Go on to the next page.*

You learn how to caulk the seams so the boat won't leak, and how to fashion a rudder that won't slow the boat down but will be strong enough to withstand the pounding of the waves.

Once in a while you go out in a boat to see how it performs. From this you learn what is needed to streamline boats so they will cut through the waves as well as how the oars should be placed and the sail rigged.

---

*Turn to page 81.*

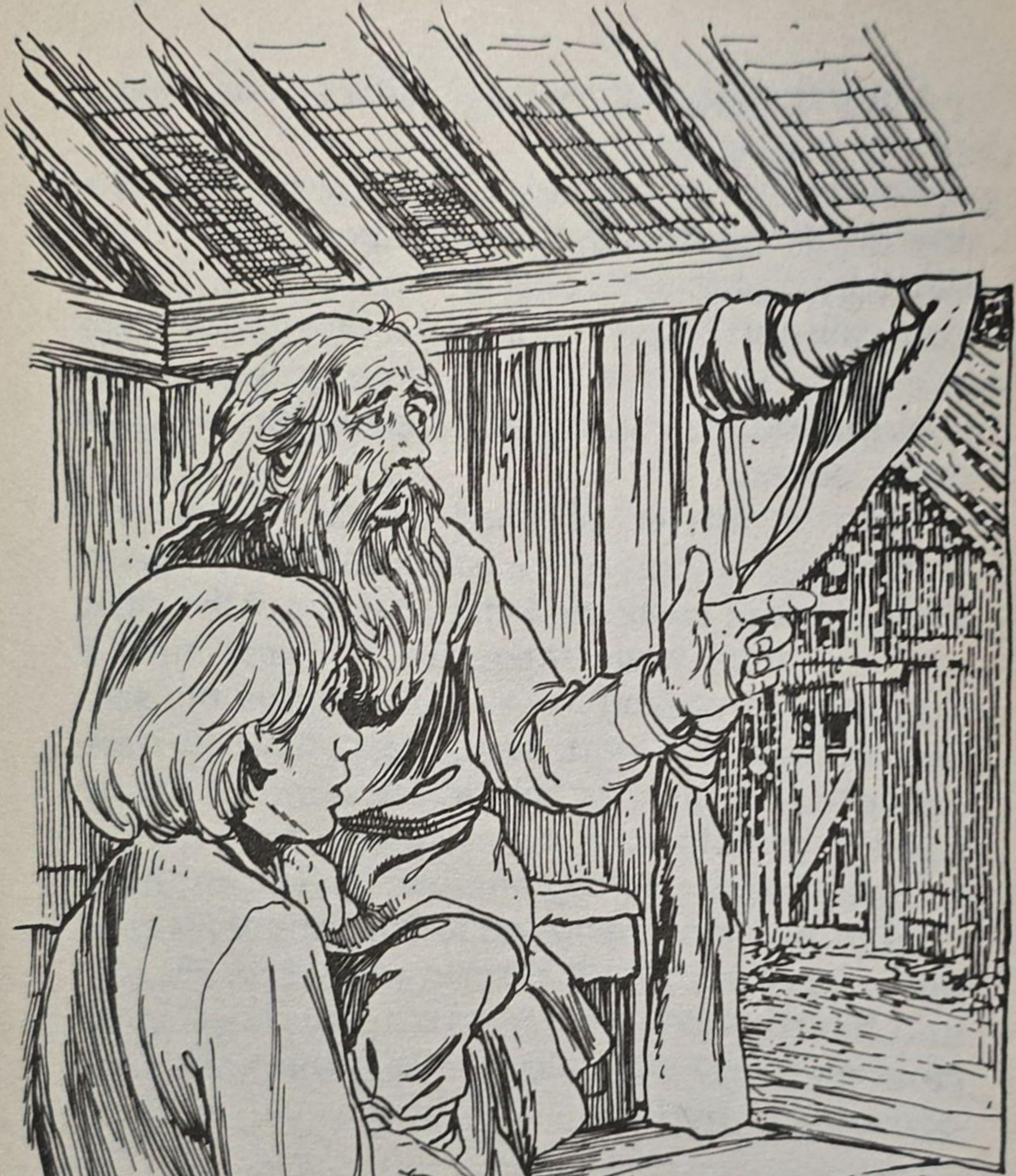
Early the next afternoon a sailor shouts, "Land ho!"

You look at your map. With a finger you draw a line across it, tracing the ship's progress. "Those must be the islands that lie north of Scotland," you call out. "Keep well clear of them, for there are rocks all about them." The ship sails safely past the islands. Ahead lie three thousand miles of open ocean.

After a dinner of dried reindeer meat and flatbread, you curl up on your bearskin and go to sleep. You're awakened in the middle of the night when a huge wave strikes the ship and hurls it sideways, dropping it into the trough of the sea. You sit up with a start. The sky is completely dark except for a glow of light in the north. A strong wind is gusting from the same direction.

The ship is pitching and rolling. Torfinn, huddled in his skins, hangs on to the arms of his captain's chair. His mouth is set in a tight line. His hair and beard glisten with drops of spray. The *Osprey* careens wildly atop another wave and heels dangerously to port.

*Turn to page 24.*



You know in your heart that Ingvar is right, and you decide at that moment to evade Torfinn's clutches regardless of the price. You hold up your head proudly, look at Horik, and say, "I will never be slave to a tyrant. I'd rather starve in the woods." Secretly, though, you're hoping it won't come to that.

You decide to talk to some of your friends in the village about your plan and ask them if they know where you could hide from Torfinn and his warriors. It's a cold, raw day. The dark clouds overhead seem to mirror your troubled feelings. Your first visit is to Horik's uncle, Aun, who is said to be the wisest man in the village.

"You would have to travel very far to escape," Aun tells you. "Beyond the piney mountains to the land of the red-bearded men. Torfinn's warriors would not follow you there. But this is a place you would never reach."

He points through the opening to his hut. Snowflakes are fluttering down, the first of the season. If it is already snowing in the sheltered valleys, you know that fierce winds must be blowing and deep snows falling in the mountains. Still, you are determined to go.

---

*Turn to page 36.*

Svein scrambles up the rocks until he is standing beside you. He shields his eyes and looks to the west. "It's true," he says, his voice quivering with excitement. "All my life I've heard about the great fishing grounds. And now we've found them!"

"If only we live to tell someone about them," you say. Svein nods, and you both turn to look east toward the mainland.

You can see the coastal mountains clearly, their snowcaps glistening in the sun. The coast is only ten or fifteen miles away from your island, but in between lies a swirling sea speckled with reefs and islands.

You turn again, this time looking to the north, and try to figure out where you'd be if you had let the current take you. You can see by the rippling in the fast-moving water that the current curves to the left and keeps curving in an arc.

"Listen!" Svein says.

In the distance, you can hear a faint roar. "What is it?" you ask.

"The Maelstrom," he says. "The greatest whirlpool in the world. Any ship that sails too close is lost forever."

*Go on to the next page.*

"Then I guess our little boat wouldn't have had a chance," you say, relieved that you made the right choice. "Lucky for us that we landed. But how will we ever get across?"

"There's a safe time," Svein says. "When the tide is slack. That should be in about three hours, I'd guess. But we can't wait that long—we must set out while the current is still running, or we won't have enough time to make it past the Maelstrom before it forms again."

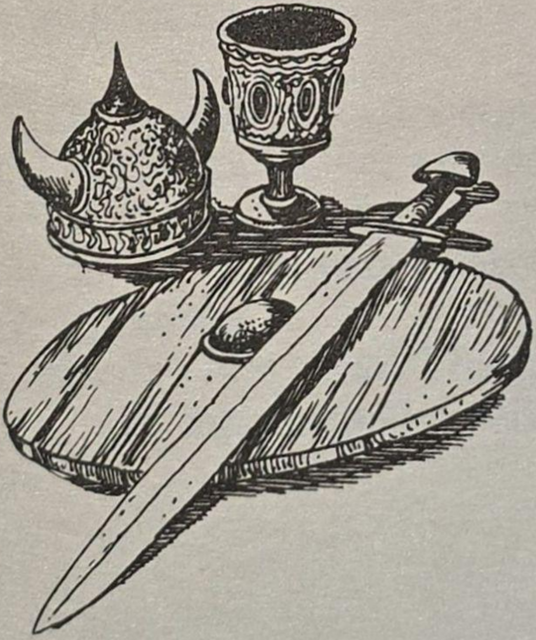
---

*Turn to page 30.*

"Wait up!" you call to Svein. "I want to take a look at something first."

You take a step into the cave and wait a moment for your eyes to adjust to the darkness. You don't want to keep Svein waiting too long though, so you take a step forward, and then another.

You hold out your hand, feeling for a wall. At that moment you lose your footing. The ground gives way—you're sliding, faster and faster. There is a crash, and all goes black.



*Turn to page 67.*

The months pass. In the spring and summer you work long hours building ships and boats. During the periods of winter darkness and bitter gales, you spend your time huddled in your hut or tramping through the snow in search of rabbits and birds.

You are happiest when Torfinn and his favorite warriors are on raiding expeditions. Each time they go away you wish they'd never come back, but they always return, usually with booty and slaves.

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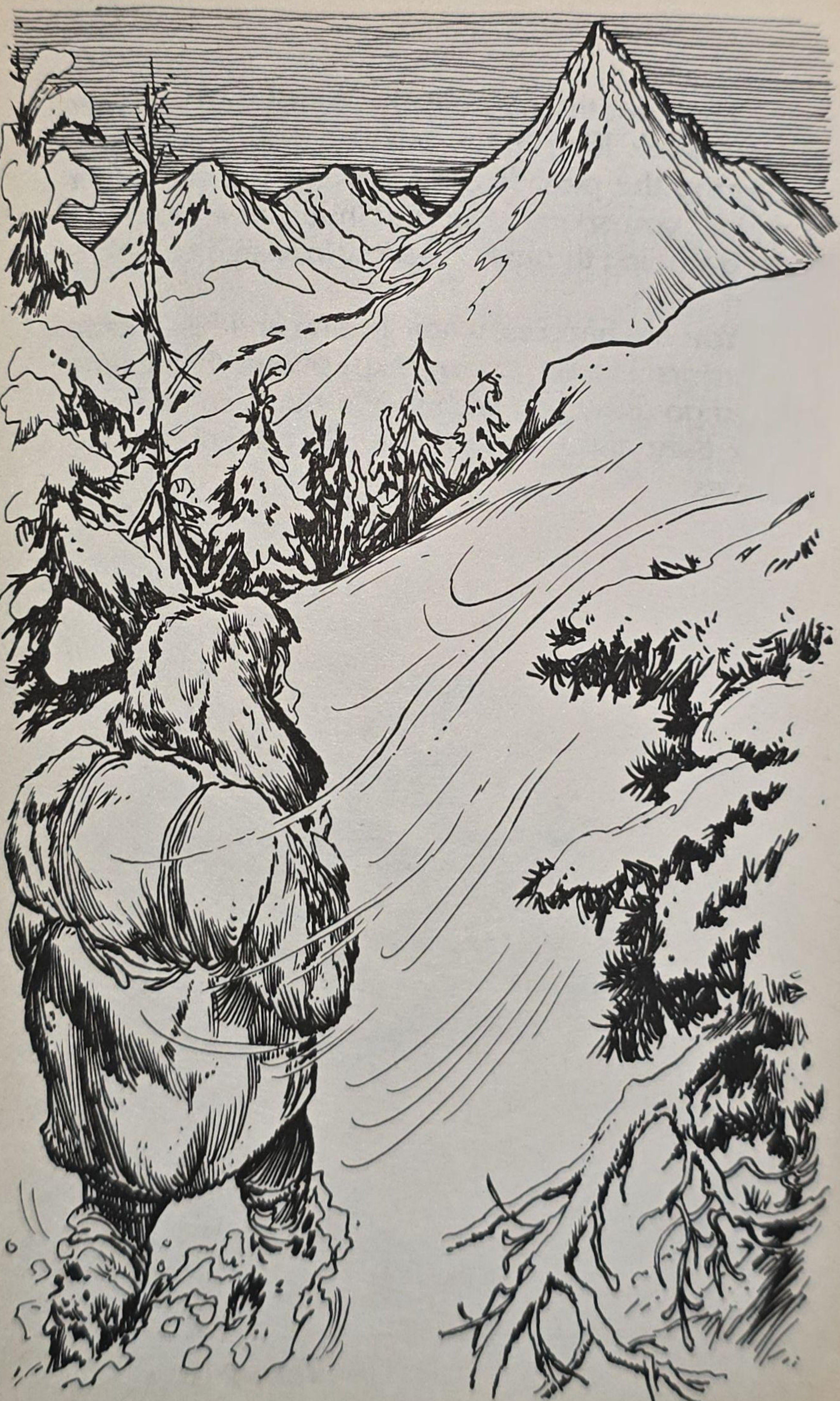
*Turn to page 71.*



You thank Aun and Astrid for their advice and set out at once on the trail to the granite peak.

Soon the snow stops, leaving only a light dusting on the ground, but the wind turns cold. You pull your bearskin tightly around your neck. After a few miles, you leave the trail and hike up to a high, rocky ridge that is bare of trees. The ridge stretches for several miles, rising ever more steeply to the summit of the peak, the highest in the region.

The sun has set. Twilight will last several more hours, but the sky is still cloudy, and you're able to walk only another mile before it becomes too dark to pick your way among the rocks.

You find shelter in a tiny cave under a ledge, roll a rock in front of it, and go to sleep with your spear clutched in your hand. If a wolf squeezes through the opening, you'll be ready.

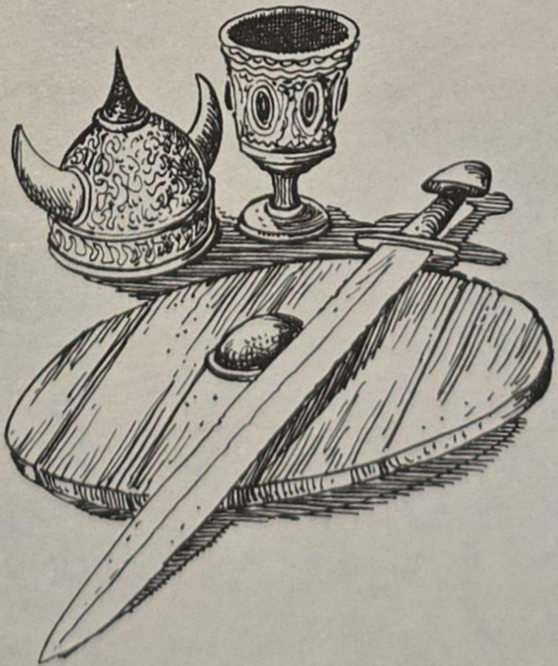
*Turn to page 70.*

You shrink back in fear. Then you realize that they are coming not to slit your throat but to cut your bonds. You're free!

Not only are you free, but you're a hero. The villagers are convinced that your warning saved their lives.

The next morning you lead the Irish to the cove where the Vikings left the *Osprey*. You arrive just in time to see Harald and Leif rowing the ship out toward the ocean. You never learn whether they made it back to Norway or perished at sea. As for you, you become a master ship builder for the Irish and one of their most respected citizens.

**The End**



You look back and see mountaintops over the horizon to the east. Slivers of ice—in actuality huge glaciers—reflect the light like tiny sparkling jewels.

Svein has already turned the boat around and started rowing toward the mainland.

"Let me know when you get tired, and I'll take over," you say. You lie back to rest while Svein rows, and soon you doze off.

He awakens you later. "You'd better row for a while," he says. "We're caught in a new current—it's been taking us up the coast."

You sit up and look around. The mountains on the mainland are still in sight, and you can see a point of land jutting out into the sea about ten miles away.

Two more tiny islands, hardly more than reefs, lie ahead. The current is carrying your boat past the first of them.

"The tide is very strong here," Svein says, stretching his stiff arms, "and it's getting stronger."

You can tell that yourself as soon as you take over the oars. The current is carrying the boat twice as fast as you can row, and it's getting faster the closer you get to the north point of the second of the small islands.

---

*Turn to page 23.*

The two of you board the empty ship, climb in through the window of the little house, and set about removing the skeleton. The bones are dry and brittle, and some of them fall apart when you touch them. You grimly gather up the pieces and lay the bones together on dry land. Then you and Svein settle down in the boat to wait for the tide to rise.

"Do you think we'll make it out of here?" you ask.

Svein glances toward the skeleton lying on the shore. "If the spirit of this chieftain is with us," he says, "we'll sail back to Norway, and earn fame, honor, and riches. If his spirit curses us, then we shall surely die."

The rising water laps gently against the sides of the ship. In a few hours the tide will be high enough to float it. Until then you must wait—and wonder.

**The End**

"Let's ride with the current," you tell Svein. You ease up on the oars, stroking just enough to keep the boat headed toward the coast.

The current sweeps you past the north point of the island and carries you rapidly away from it, straight toward the mainland. You feel a surge of excitement at how fast you're going. After only fifteen minutes, the coast looks a lot closer.

"Get ready to row hard," Svein says. "This current won't keep going the same way."

He's right. After you've traveled a couple of miles, the current begins to carry you to the left. You have to work hard to keep from drifting away from your goal.

Meanwhile the water has been getting rougher. Though there's very little wind, waves clash against each other, sending spray straight up in the air. Water splashes into your boat. Svein picks up a wooden scoop, ready to bail if he has to.

The current is carrying you faster than ever now, but despite your best efforts, the boat is drifting more and more to the left. You're still getting closer to the mainland, but it's obvious that you won't be able to make the point you were aiming for. You'll have to land farther to the north.

"Listen!" Svein says suddenly. When you turn toward him, you are shocked by the look of terror on his face.

---

*Turn to page 27.*

You decide to stay with Horik. If Torfinn the Terrible takes you to be his slave, you'll find a way to escape somehow. Trying to escape now over the snow-covered, wolf-infested mountains would be foolhardy.

Soon word comes that Torfinn's warriors have entered the village. You stand with Horik at the entrance to his hut, waiting for them.

"It's best to be cooperative," Horik says, "Torfinn usually only kills people who resist. If we're lucky, he'll sweep through the village, take his tribute, and leave."

Within the hour Torfinn's warriors are at your door. They are dressed in bearskins, and each carries a spiked club in one hand and a sword in the other. Behind them is a troop of young men armed with spears, hatchets, and rocks.

Torfinn rides up through this mob on a chestnut horse. He is a broad-chested man with straw-colored hair as twisted and matted as a bird's nest. He brings his horse to a sharp halt, dismounts, and looks around with cold blue eyes. He beckons Horik to come to him.

You had feared a massacre, but Horik was right. Torfinn says he only wants his tribute—a dozen large bearskins, the village's finest tools, three skilled workmen, and you! He comes over and lays a hand on your shoulder.

"I've heard of your skills as a boat builder," he says. "You are now my servant. Do your work well, and you will be rewarded."

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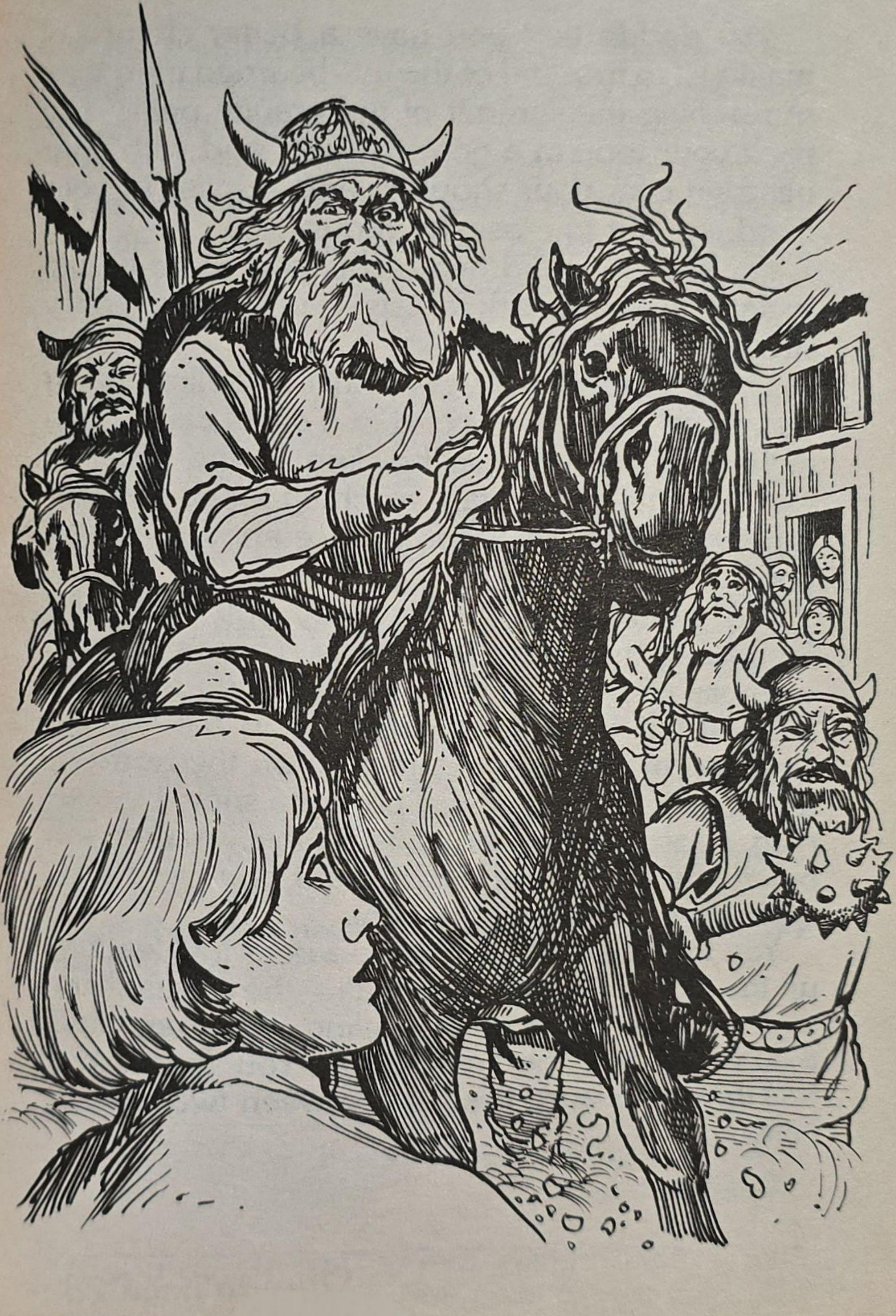
*Turn to page 94.*



You decide that you have a better chance of making it to the land of the red-bearded men than of reaching the summit of the granite peak. You pack your food in a goatskin bag, and with your bearskin over your shoulder and a spear in your hand, set out to cross the mountains.

For two days and two nights you travel across rocky ridges and dark forests, wading through icy streams and scaling peaks.

The first night you sleep in the hollow of an enormous tree, the second in a small cave. Each night you hear wolves howling in the distance and wake up with a start, reaching for your spear. But the wolves never come close enough to find you.

The morning of the third day you reach the foothills of the piney mountains. There's an inch or more of snow on the ground here, and you know it will be much deeper up in the passes. Gray storm clouds are gathering on the horizon, and it looks as if there will be more snow by evening. Crossing the mountains in this weather will be difficult, if not impossible. But you can't turn back after coming all this way.

You look around and notice a deer trail leading up the mountain. You're in luck—the tracks show that several deer are traveling together, and they've packed the snow hard. You follow the trail upward toward the pass between two mountains.

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*Turn to page 78.*

"If the Irish have defeated Torfinn, they'll come to take this ship," Harald says. "There's nothing we can do to stop them."

You scan the horizon and then climb the mast and peer over the hedgerows. A band of warriors is coming across the meadow, headed straight toward you. There's not a Viking among them!

"The Irish are coming!" you call down to the others.

"We must row away from the shore and then set sail," Leif says. You shinny back down the mast and join the others on the deck.

"Two men can't row a ship across the North Sea," Harald says. "And our sail will never hold if a strong wind comes up. Better to reason with these Irish. After all, we weren't the ones who attacked their village. We'll tell them we were slaves and didn't have anything to do with it."

"I'd rather take my chances with the sea than with the Irish," Leif says. "Besides, I have a dream of sailing across the ocean someday, and I don't want to give it up." He turns to you. "It seems that you have the deciding vote. What do you want to do?"

---

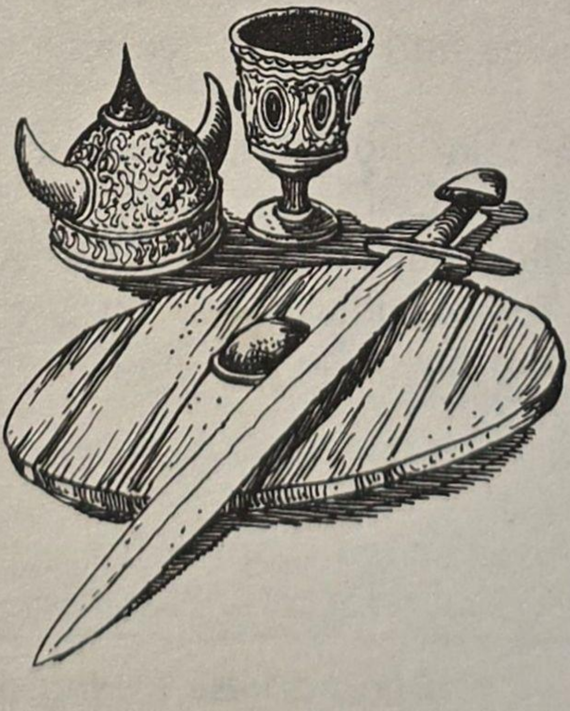
*If you advise setting out to sea,*
*turn to page 90.*

*If you advise staying and trying to reason with*
*the Irish, turn to page 77.*

The hunters stop and look at you with amazement. Then they come toward you. You learn that they are settlers from the kingdom of Denmark. Several of them speak your language, and when they hear what you have to tell them about Torfinn, they thank you heartily. They say that they have heard tales about this tyrant, but there are many more of their people nearby and you shall have their protection.

You almost can't believe it. You've never been happier. You are free at last!

**The End**

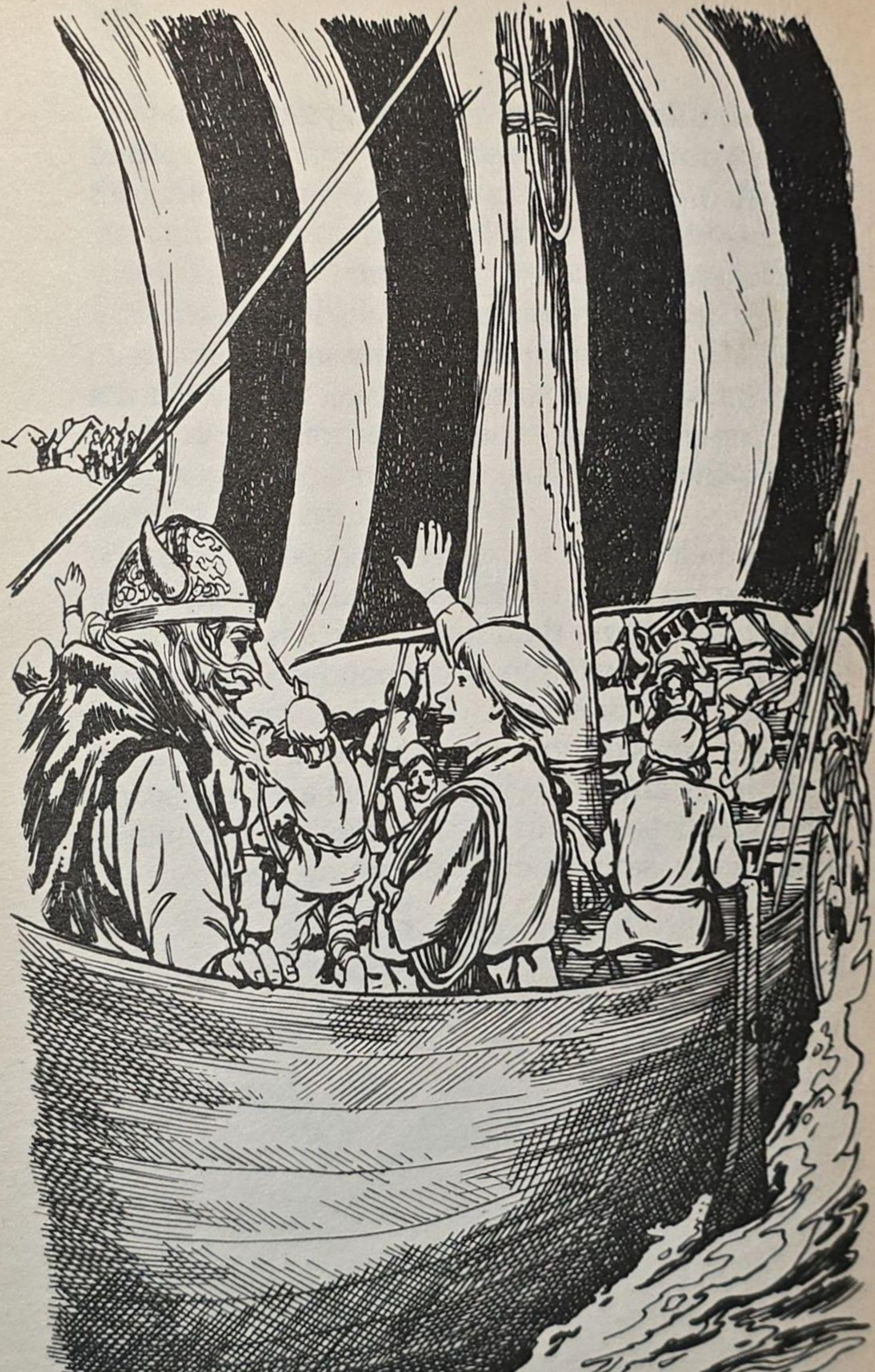


A few minutes later, something slams into you, waking you up. Groggily, you try to sit up and push it off. When it groans, you realize that it's Svein—he must have followed you into the cave and fallen down on top of you!

Your friend groans again. His leg is bleeding, and your head is throbbing, but luckily you both seem to be in one piece. You look up and see the cave opening ten feet above you. It's a sheer drop—there's no way you'll be able to get back up!

You help Svein to his feet and peer around in the dim light. You are in a cavern, perhaps fifty feet across. More than half the area is covered by water, and at the edge of this pond is as fine a ship as you have ever seen. The mast, yardarm, and sail are laid end-to-end on top of it. It is loaded with casks and boxes, as if it were about to set off on a sea voyage. Strangest of all, there is a miniature house set in the middle of the deck.

*Turn to page 40.*



"It would be wiser to sail to Iceland," you say. "Once we've completed that voyage, we can decide whether it's safe to cross the great ocean."

Torfinn gives you a quick, angry look, but then he nods. "I think you speak wisely. We shall go to Iceland."

The crew is selected and provisions stowed aboard the *Osprey* for the long trip. The two small boats are lashed in place, one forward and one aft. You check the sail carefully to make sure all the seams are tightly sewn, then go over the rigging to make sure there are no weak spots in the lines and pulleys that control the sail. Two men hoist the anchor aboard and lash it securely to the deck near the bow.

On a crisp, breezy day in early June the lines are untied from the dock. Oarsmen row the ship out of the cove and into the middle of the fjord. The breeze is fair, and you help raise the sail. The villagers wave from the hilltop overlooking the edge of the cove as the *Osprey* sails proudly out onto the open sea.

The wind continues fair, the sail billows out, and the boat cuts smoothly through the whitecaps. In a few hours you're out of sight of land.

*Turn to page 22.*

Luckily, no wolves come. You set out in the first light of morning, determined to reach the top of the granite peak before dark.

Mile after mile you trudge along. The air is clear and cold, and the wind almost calm. You eat dried reindeer meat that you've brought with you and berries you find along the way, and you drink from a spring wherever you find one.

---

*Turn to page 95.*

Sometimes you and the other slaves talk of trying to escape. But Torfinn's warriors watch you carefully, never giving you the opportunity to turn your dreams of freedom into reality.

One day Torfinn orders you and the other workers to build the strongest and fastest ship in Norway. It is to be eighty feet long and carry eighteen oarsmen and a large sail. Two small boats will be carried aboard it. A deck below the gunwales will have enough room under it for supplies, weapons, and captured booty. A small cabin will give shelter to Torfinn and his crew.

It takes two years to build this ship. Torfinn is all smiles the day it's launched. The ship, which he names the *Osprey*, is truly a thing of beauty, with its oiled wood surfaces and carved dragon bow.

As soon as the *Osprey* is launched, you board it and crawl through the bilge to see if any water is leaking in. When you come back on deck you find Torfinn himself standing over you.

"Any leaks?" he asks.

You shake your head. "She's dry as a bone."

Torfinn smiles, his eyes glittering with anticipation and greed.

---

*Turn to page 12.*

You decide to steer the boat to the right. You and Svein take turns rowing. The sea is still calm, and you make good progress. About an hour later, Svein is rowing and you are keeping watch when you spot something through the haze.

"Land ahead," you cry.

Svein looks where you're pointing. "I hope it's the mainland and not just an island," he says.

As your boat draws closer to the land, a fresh breeze springs up and blows away what's left of the fog. The land is revealed to be a rocky island no more than a few hundred feet across. You stand up in the boat. The island is so low you can see over it. Beyond it lies nothing but the open ocean. Your heart sinks. You've been heading west. The mainland must be to the east.

There's no point in trying to put ashore on the tiny island. You might be able to survive for a few weeks on shellfish and pools of rainwater, but it would be a miracle if anyone found you. There are thousands of islands like this off the coast of Norway, most of them uninhabited and uninhabitable.

"Look," Svein cries. "The fog has lifted toward the mainland, too."

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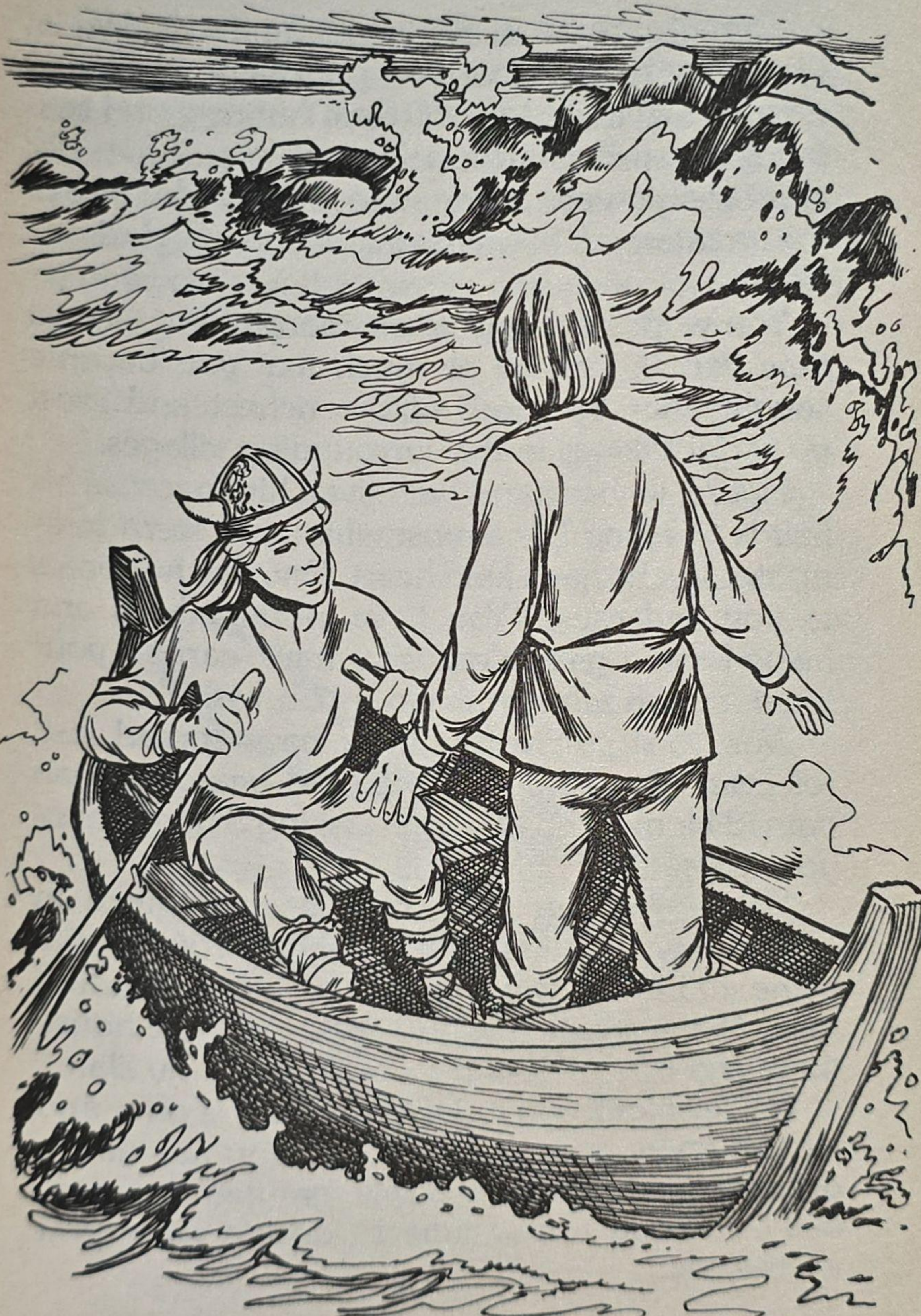
*Turn to page 59.*



Though you're a slave, you're far luckier in your new occupation than you were when you were in servitude to Kalf. Boat building and seafaring are the greatest achievements of the Vikings, and you are assigned to work under one of the greatest of the Viking builders, Sigurd the White.

You work hard and learn many skills. After a time you've learned so much that you become sought after by some of the richest and most powerful Vikings in the surrounding villages.

Sigurd, whose name was given him because his hair is so blond it is almost white, is a stern taskmaster, but he has a kind heart. One day he comes to you and says, "You have worked hard and helped me a great deal. You have earned your freedom and are free to go if you wish."

Word that you're free must have spread fast, for later that day a burly, red-bearded man named Horik, who has been visiting Sigurd, takes you aside.

"Sigurd tells me you have learned much in only a few months," Horik says. "You should come and live in my village, which is a hundred miles to the south. You will have the best house there and be the chief boat builder for my clan."

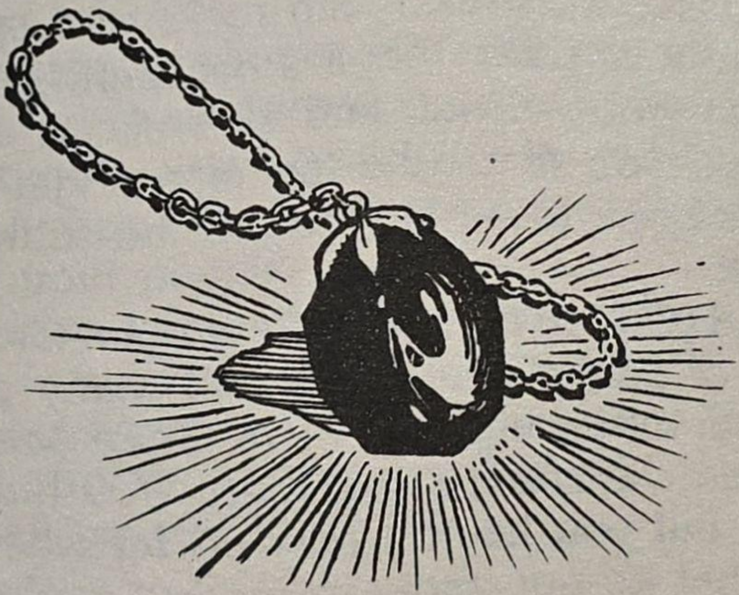
You tell Horik you will think about his offer and let him know your answer soon. You are still so overwhelmed by your newly granted freedom that you need a little time to decide what you want to do.

---

*Turn to page 13.*

You sleep well that night. In the morning Ingvar gives you a sweet nectar to drink before you set out on your journey. It makes you feel stronger than you ever have in your life. From that moment on, you know Ingvar has been close to the land of Odin, that the gods have looked upon him with favor, and that health and good fortune will follow you wherever you go.

**The End**



Once ashore the men begin to set up camp. Torfinn orders you to climb to the top of the steep hill that rises to the east of the harbor and report what you see.

You are glad to oblige. This could be your chance to escape! From the top of the hill it can't be more than a dozen miles back to the spot where you saw smoke rising. If you can reach it, you can warn the people that Torfinn the Terrible has landed nearby. You feel sure they will welcome you among them.

Your legs are wobbly from being at sea so long, but you hurry as fast as you can to the top of the hill. From this vantage point you look out at the rolling grassland, strewn with rocks and spotted with clumps of trees, that lies between you and your goal. You set out, and after about a two-hour hike, you reach the top of a ridge. From here you hope to be able to see the settlement you seek.

Instead you see a broad tract of open land with patches of purple-hued grass and many ponds, some with mist rising from them. Then you spy a wisp of smoke about a mile away. You hurry toward it, but you haven't traveled far when you realize that it's not smoke at all, but a plume of steam rising from beneath the ground.

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*Turn to page 97.*

"Let's try to reason with them," you say.

Leif and Harald nod. "Then we shall stay," Leif says. The three of you get into the small boat and row to shore.

At least a dozen Irishmen armed with clubs and spears are almost upon you. You, Harald, and Leif raise your hands in a gesture of peace.

The Irish stop short, apparently surprised that you haven't tried to fight or flee. One of them speaks your language. He steps forward and tells you how Torfinn and his warriors attacked and killed many of their people, but that the Irish slew every one of the invaders in the end.

"Why," he asks, "should we not slay you, too?"

"We were not Torfinn's warriors," you explain. "We were slaves, forced to work on his ship. He was a tyrant, and we are glad to be free of him. We ask your mercy because we bear no ill will toward your people."

The Irish talk among themselves in a tongue you can't understand. Then the one who speaks your language says, "We shall allow you to stay with us and tend our sheep. But henceforth this ship shall be ours."

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*Turn to page 11.*

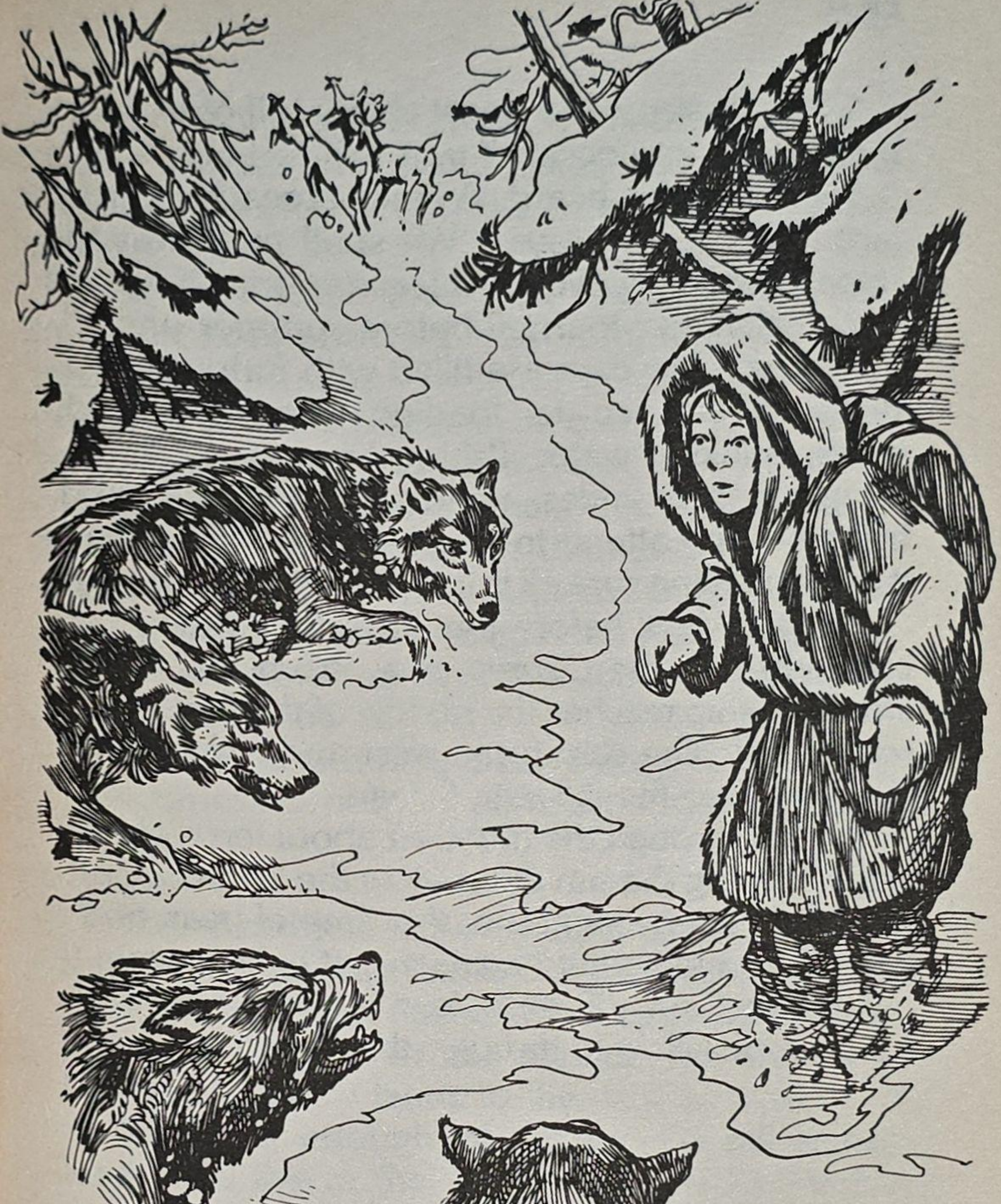
You make steady progress over the packed snow of the deer trail. The towering pines shield you from the wind and lend a fresh scent to the air. By midday you reach the pass. The snow on either side of the trail here is at least a couple of feet deep, but as long as you stick to the path, the going is easy.

Soon afterward you hear the sound of hoofbeats. You jump off the trail into the deep snow. A herd of deer comes into sight. It must be the same herd you've been following, but now for some reason they're running back toward you. They race past without even noticing you standing in the snow, their soft black eyes wide with terror.

What's going on? you wonder. Your question is answered by the howling of wolves. A second later you see them, coming over the rim of the hill.

The wolves were chasing the deer, but when they see you, they stop short. You know what they're thinking—*What an easy meal we've found.*

**The End**



"The *Osprey* is the finest ship in all of Norway. It can cross any ocean," you tell Torfinn.

He strokes his beard. A smile spreads over his face. "Good," he says. "We shall provision the ship immediately. We must leave at once if we are to complete our journey before summer ends."

The next few days are filled with furious work. While others see to loading supplies—food, herbs, drinking water, fishing lines, rope, tools, weapons, bear hides, reindeer skins, flint, and trinkets—you attend to checking the rigging and the sail, making sure all is in order for the voyage.

Just ten days before the summer solstice the crewmen row the *Osprey* away from the dock. Once the ship reaches the middle of the fjord, you set the sail. The ship turns west and sails out of the fjord onto the Atlantic Ocean.

You sail through the night. At about ten o'clock in the evening the sun dips below the horizon, but total darkness never falls at this time of year, and soon after midnight it begins to get lighter again.

Everyone, even Torfinn, is in a good mood as the boat cuts cleanly through the water.

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*Turn to page 49.*

After two years with Horik, you have become a master builder. Ships and boats from your yard are sought after by all the chieftains of Scandinavia.

One day Horik takes you aside. "Several of my men have returned from a hunting trip with bad news," he says. "Torfinn the Terrible, the fiercest of the Viking raiders, is coming to Gotstad tomorrow to demand his tribute."

You shudder when you hear this. You've heard that Torfinn is even fiercer than Kalf the Cruel. His warriors go where they please and take what they want from every village and farm they visit.

"He will take the new ship we're building, I'll wager," you say angrily.

Horik nods and rests a hand on your shoulder. "He comes not only for our boat—he also comes for you."

"Me?"

"Yes. Word has spread that you are the finest ship builder in the land. Torfinn wants you to work for him as his slave. He wants you to build him a fine ship so he can conquer not only all of Norway but new lands to the west as well."

"I've had enough of slavery. I'd rather run away and live in the tundra with the Ice People than go with Torfinn," you say.

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*Turn to page 31.*

From below, the summit of the granite peak looks as sharp as a needle, but in fact you've reached the flat area near the top that Astrid mentioned. In the center of this area a spire of sheer, smooth rock, too steep to climb, rises another hundred feet.

Darkness is coming on fast. Weary as you are, you walk around the spire several times and climb among the rocky formations at its base, looking for the holy man's cave. You find birds' eggs and berries in abundance. Some rabbits scamper past. How they got here is a mystery, but their presence explains how the holy man could survive on this desolate mountaintop.

---

*Turn to page 16.*

"Keep rowing!" Torfinn shouts. "Don't let up now!"

The helmsman's face is pale with exhaustion. You struggle to help him keep a grip on the tiller. There's no thought of trying to make headway in a sea like this. The wind and waves are driving you south, to where you cannot tell.

At last the rain stops and the wind slows. Patches of blue appear among the clouds. You take stock of the damage—a boat and two men overboard, two other men injured when a wave hurled them across the ship, a crate of food and two barrels of water wrenched from their moorings and carried over the side, the sail ripped, the lines tangled.

"We must land to make repairs and get new supplies," you tell Torfinn.

He nods. There's a grim look on his face. For a moment you're afraid that he blames you for advising him badly about this journey. But he says, "No other ship would have held together in a storm like that. You built it well."

A cry of "Land ho!" comes from the lookout.

Torfinn stands and peers to the south, shading his eyes with his hand.

"It must be Ireland," you say. "It can't be anything else."

"Then it's to Ireland we shall go," Torfinn announces.

---

*Turn to page 99.*

The journey to the wintering place passes without incident. You help the others set up camp in a hollow overlooking a fjord. But you've only been at the wintering place for a few days when a band of Viking raiders rides whooping and hollering into the village and seizes several people, including you! They carry you to their encampment on a hilltop. Your spirits sink as you realize that once again you are a slave.

The raiders' camp is quite near the ocean. You can see it in the distance, shimmering in the late-afternoon sun. In the opposite direction are high mountains with glaciers glistening in the clefts and valleys near their peaks.

The raiders who have taken you do not want you for themselves. They sell you and their other captives to a slaveholder in a fishing village. Once again you begin a new life—this time as an assistant to a boat builder in a yard set in a cove off one of the greatest fjords in the kingdom of Norway.

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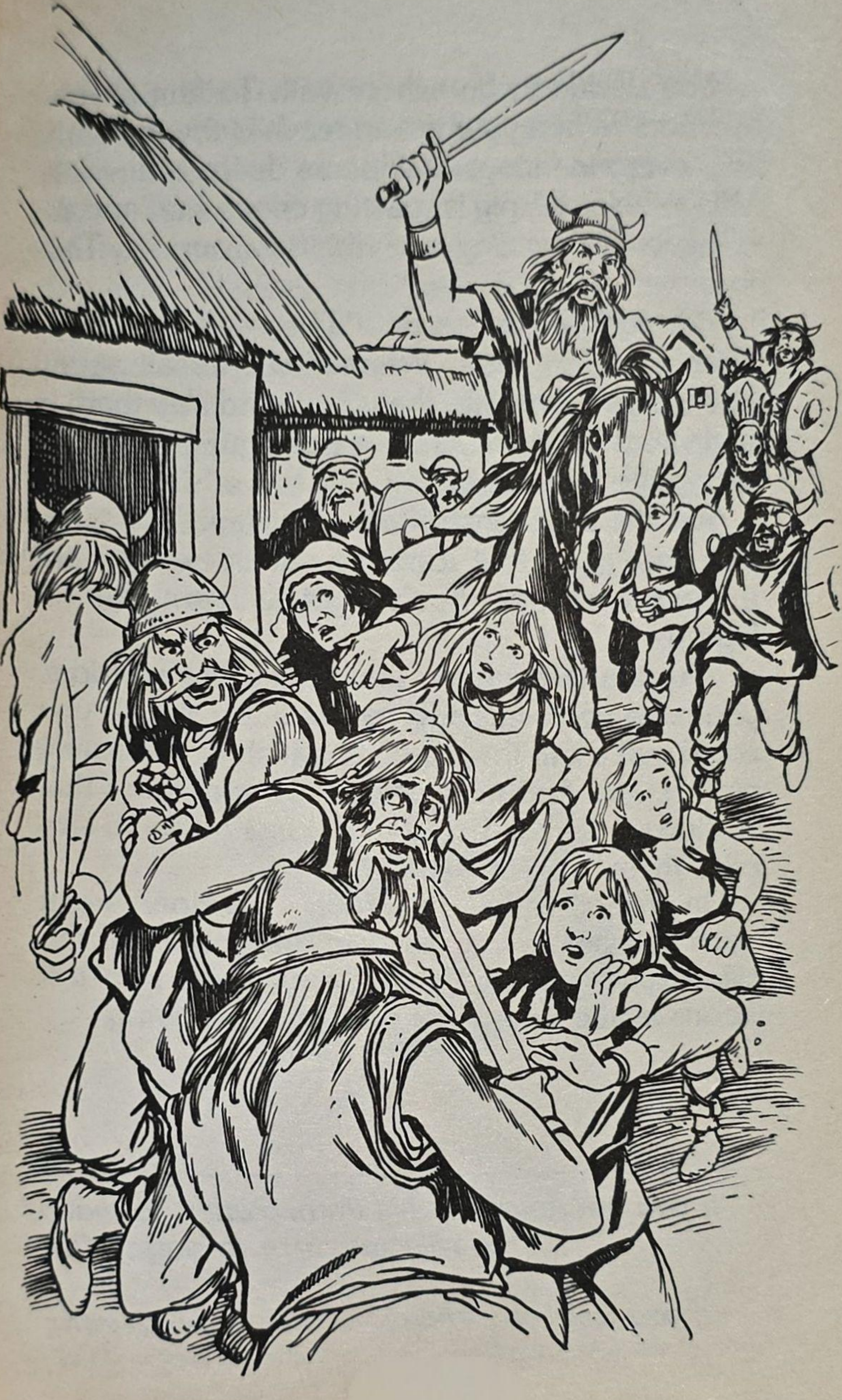
*Turn to page 74.*



You decide to go ashore with Torfinn and his warriors. When your group reaches the top of the hill, everyone stops and peers down at the little village below. A pig is roasting over a fire, and the villagers are dancing and singing around it. They look very happy.

"Good," Torfinn says. "They will be sleepy after their big feast. When they are all sound asleep, we'll rush into the village and slay them in their beds. Then we'll have no arguments about taking what we want."

You are shocked to hear this plan. It reminds you once again that Torfinn is not an explorer but a vicious criminal. You've got to warn the villagers!

You're a fast runner, and unlike the warriors, you have no spears and hatchets to carry. If you could make it to the village, the Irish would surely protect you. And there are so many of them that Torfinn would not dare attack unless he could surprise them.

On the other hand, Torfinn's warriors might catch you before you reached the bottom of the hill. Maybe you should wait and sneak into the woods a little later when no one is watching.

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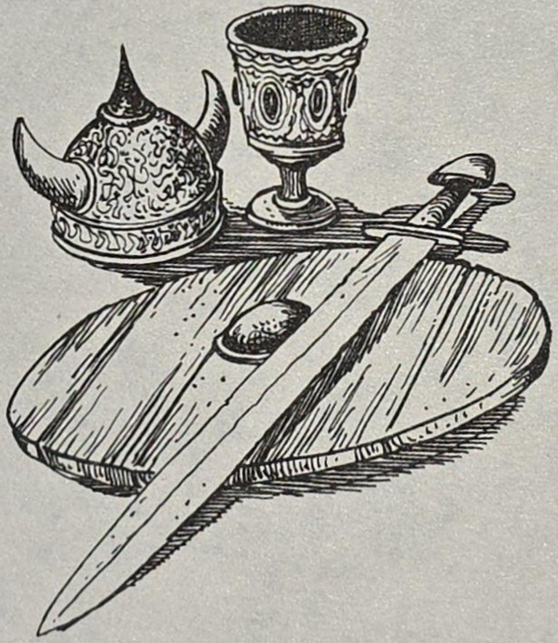
*If you run down the hill immediately to warn the villagers, turn to page 100.*

*If you wait for a chance to sneak away later, turn to page 104.*

Before the sun dips below the horizon, you've entered a fjord dotted with little settlements. Two boats come out to meet you and escort you to shore. That night you sleep in a dry straw bed, the best you've had in a long time, and the next day you, Harald, and Leif are taken to meet Gudrod, a bear of a man with a laugh so loud it almost hurts your ears.

When Gudrod hears your story, he slaps his knee. "By Thor, this is the best news I've heard in years. We're rid of Torfinn the Terrible, and you've brought me the best ship in Norway to boot!"



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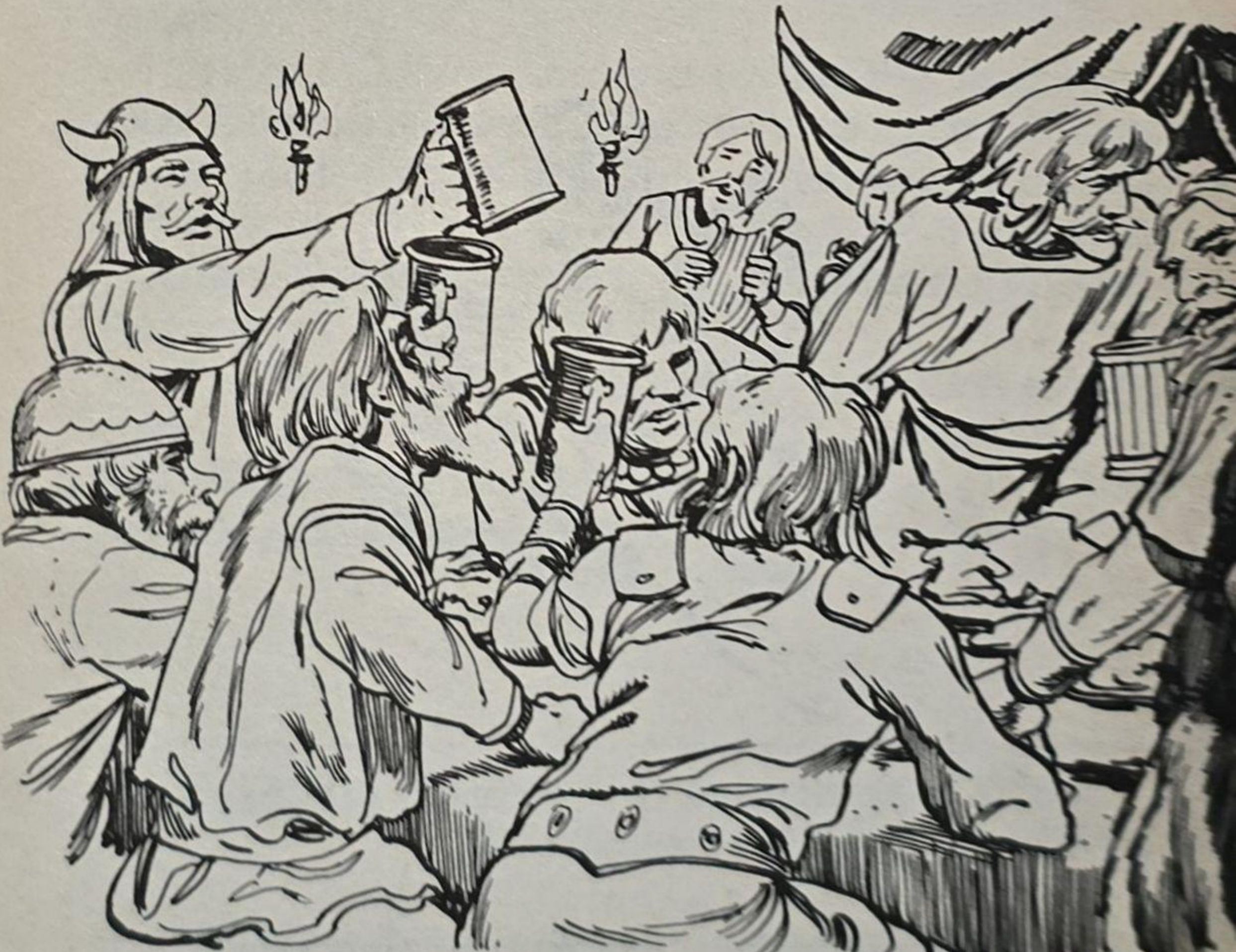
*Go on to the next page.*

Gudrod instructs his men to prepare a banquet to celebrate your return, and that night you dine at a great oak table in a huge stone hall. Torches burn, meat sizzles on the fire, musicians play the lyre and horns, the villagers dance and sing, and everyone feasts upon roast lamb and sweets.

Afterward, Gudrod gathers you, Harald, and Leif around him. "You three deserve almost anything you want," he says. "Leif, you are the oldest—what is your wish?"

The sailor looks out toward the sea. "I want to



cross the ocean," he says. "I know that wonderful things are to be found on the other side. Perhaps a new land, even more bountiful than our own. Let me take the *Osprey*, with my good crewmates here, and see what we can discover. I'll need provisions, new sails and rigging, and strong, brave men. If I have them, there's no place I cannot sail."

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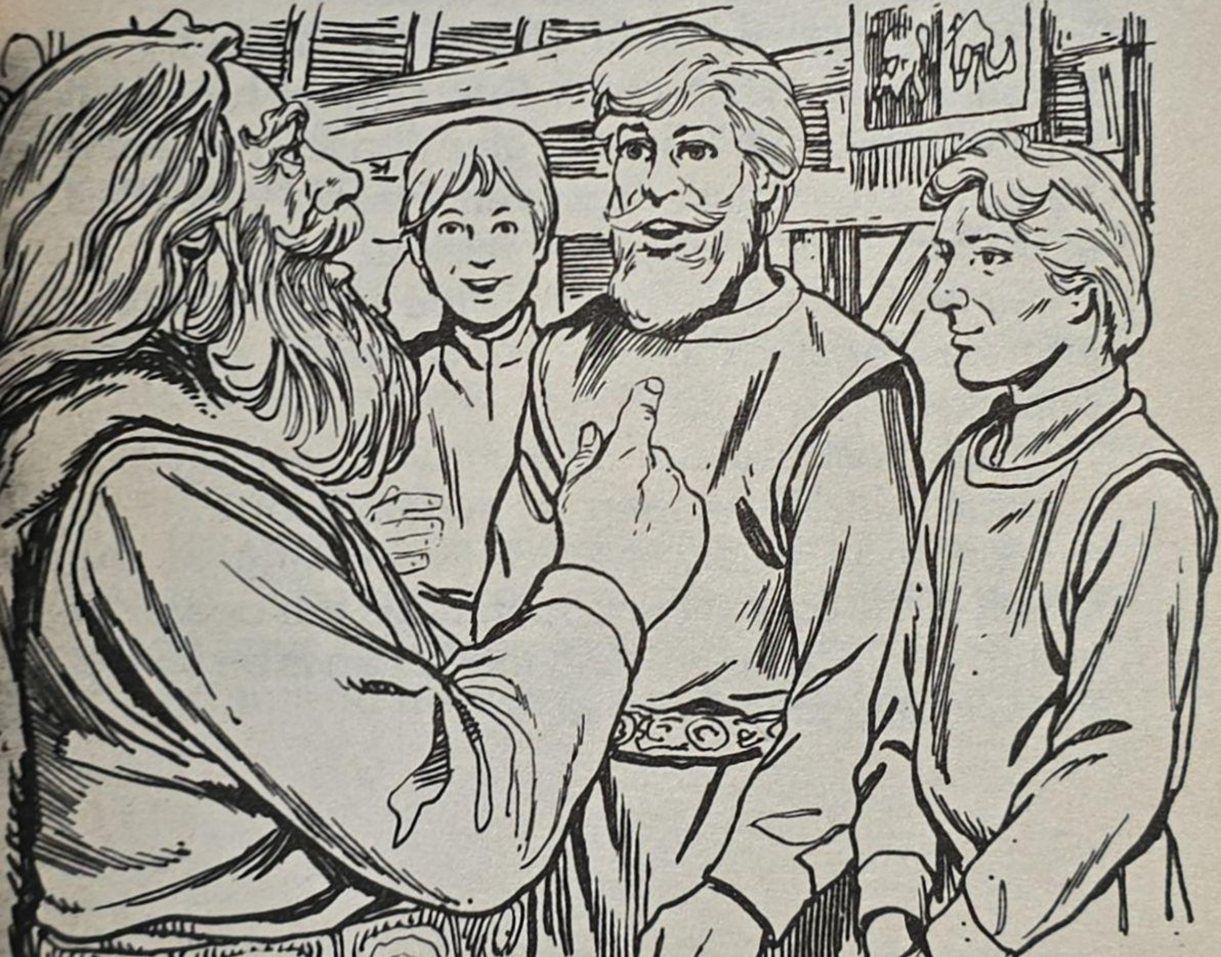
*Turn to page 32.*



"I'm with Leif," you say. "Let's put to sea."

Leif pats you on the back. Harald grumbles, but he knows he's been outvoted, and there's no time to argue. You haul in the anchor while Leif and Harald man the oars.

The two of them stroke hard, and the *Osprey* moves slowly away from the shore. You take hold of the tiller and steer the ship toward the entrance to the cove.

There are only two oarsmen instead of eighteen, but the water in the cove is calm, and the breeze is pushing the ship toward the open sea. By the time the Irish reach the water's edge, you're out of range of their arrows.

You can still see them. Some are standing on the shoreline, shaking their fists. Others have run off, perhaps to get a boat to give chase. You soon have the sail rigged, however. Harald and Leif leave their oars to help you raise it.

Though the sail is only half the size it was before the storm, the breeze fills it nicely, and the ship picks up speed.

"Their boats will never catch us," Leif says.

Harald shields his eyes as he gazes out at the choppy water where the tide is running at the mouth of the cove. "We'll soon have the ocean to reckon with," he says. "And the ocean is a sterner foe than any man I've met."

*Turn to page 98.*

You elect to remain on the *Osprey* along with Leif and Harald. The three of you watch as Torfinn and his warriors disappear into the woods. When they are out of sight, Leif and Harald tell you that they are as unhappy as you are to be in bondage to a tyrant. "Why should we be loyal to someone who plunders and kills wherever he goes?" Harald asks.

Leif nods vigorously. "We should take the *Osprey* and leave Torfinn and his warriors to the mercy of the Irish," he says.

"That's a nice idea," Harald says, "but we can't take a ship this size to sea with only the three of us."

There's nothing to do but wait. That night the three of you take turns sleeping and keeping watch. The sun sets for a few hours, then rises again at about 3:00 A.M.

You're all up early. To pass the time while waiting for Torfinn and the others to return, you set about repairing the sail. You manage to get it mended, but not as well as you'd like. You suspect that it probably would tear apart in the slightest storm.

By midmorning you've just about finished your work. The three of you stop for a drink of water. Leif says, "Something must have happened, or Torfinn and his warriors would be back by now."

---

*Turn to page 65.*

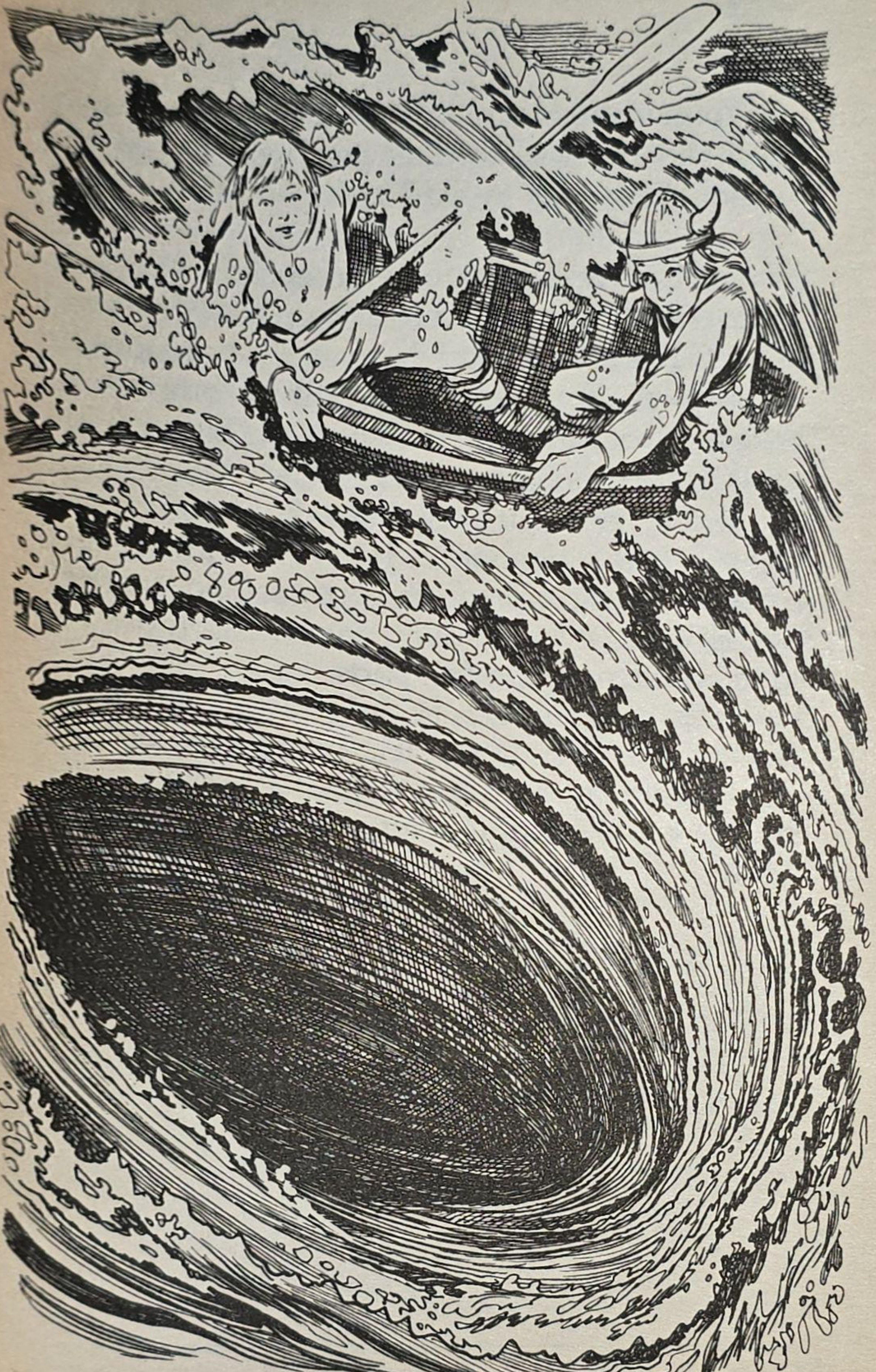
The oars are useless now. You and Svein grip the gunwales and stare at the terrible sight before you—a black hole in the sea. Your little boat is swirling toward the center.

"Svein, is there any hope?"

You're sure he'll say no, but the young Viking replies, "There is a legend about the Maelstrom—that sailors caught in it don't drown but are swept down into a kingdom beneath the surface of the Earth, and there they may live wonderful and noble lives."

The whirling waters sweep you closer and closer to the vortex. You close your eyes and hope that the legend is true.

**The End**



Torfinn gathers up his men and loads his carts with booty. Two warriors prod you along. You hardly have time to bid Horik good-bye.

After a five-day march you reach Torfinn's village, which is on a fjord farther up the Norwegian coast. The people there have sad, worn looks on their faces. You soon discover that Torfinn rules like a tyrant. Anyone who questions his authority gets ten lashes of the whip.

Torfinn gives you a tiny hut to live in, not much bigger than a doghouse. When it storms, wind and rain come through the cracks. The warriors get all the best food. Your meals consist mostly of dried bear meat and fish parts.

Torfinn has a fine boatyard stocked with tools that he has stolen from villages farther down the coast. Unhappy as you are, you get some pleasure in thinking that at least you can enjoy your work.

*Turn to page 55.*

At last you reach the base of the granite peak. At first it appears to be unscalable, but you find you're able to start climbing by locating handholds and footholds in niches in the rocks.

The hours pass, and you inch higher and higher. You know that you must reach the top before dark, for there's no place to camp along the way. On the other hand, you must take care not to hurry. A single slip could mean death. Hand over hand, foot over foot, you keep climbing, hardly daring to look down.

The sun has dropped beneath the horizon by the time you pull yourself over the rim of a ledge and crawl onto flat ground. You sink exhausted into the tundra grass, stretch your aching arms and legs, then stand up and look around at your surroundings.

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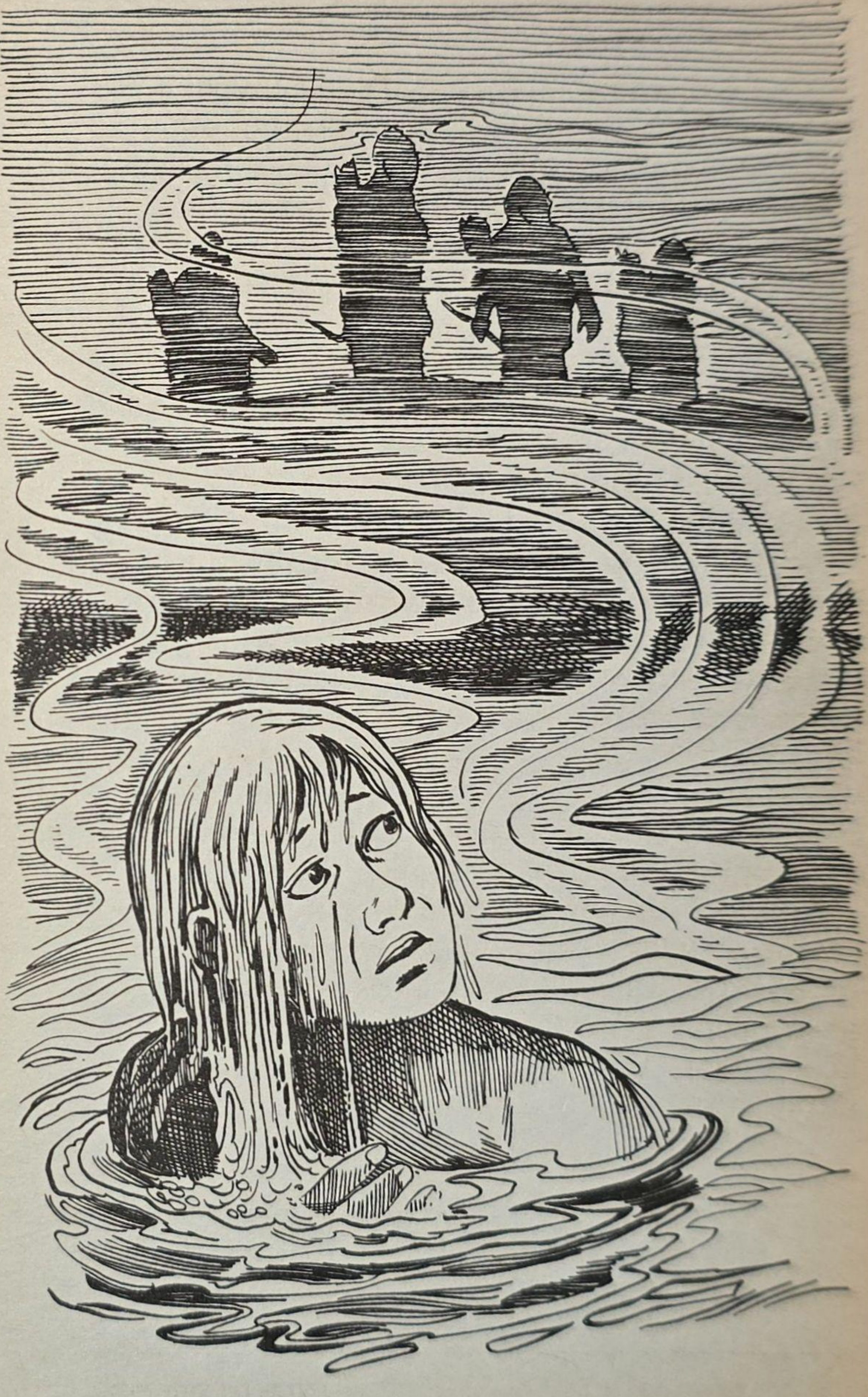
*Turn to page 82.*



Your heart sinks. There is no settlement after all. You can't live alone in this desolate country, but it's too late to go back. You've been away so long that Torfinn will know you tried to escape. You continue on, deciding you'd rather die of starvation and exposure than at the hands of Torfinn's warriors.

The sun edges toward the horizon. You know it won't get dark, but a frosty wind has come up, blowing from the glaciers to the north. On and on you walk, thinking that you'll just keep walking until you drop.

Ahead of you lies one of the ponds with mist rising from it. You're thirsty, so you stumble toward it, shivering with the cold. You approach the edge of the pond and reach over and dip your fingers into it. The water is warm—in fact, it feels like a hot bath! You leave your hand in for a while to make sure it's not too hot, then strip off your clothes and step in. The hot bubbly water warms your body and lifts your spirits.

You look up smiling, though your situation still seems hopeless. Then you see what you think is a mirage. But it's not a mirage—it's a group of hunters walking toward the pond you're bathing in! You jump out of the water, dress, and run toward them, shouting.

---

*Turn to page 66.*

Once out of the cove, you set course toward Norway. For three days and three nights you sail on, navigating by the sun, for even at night the sky is too bright for you to see the North Star.

Since there are only three of you, one must tend the rudder and the other the sail while the third rests. Whenever the wind picks up or the waves begin to push the ship off course, all three of you must work hard to keep the ship moving in the right direction.

A storm now would overwhelm you for sure. But for once your luck holds. You make it safely around the rocky coast of Scotland and set off across the North Sea.

Early the next day you see land ahead—Norway!

The mountainous green coast draws closer. It looks unfamiliar to you, but Leif smiles and says, "We're in the realm of Gudrod, chieftain of the southern shore. I know him well—he will welcome us."

---

*Turn to page 87.*

A few hours later the *Osprey* sails into a cove on the north coast of Ireland. "Bring the ship in as close to shore as possible," Torfinn orders. "Then we'll lower the boat and ferry everyone ashore."

The *Osprey* anchors a few hundred feet off a gravel beach. One of Torfinn's warriors points out a column of smoke rising from behind a nearby hill.

Torfinn slaps him on the back, chuckling. "Stow your oars and pick up your spears, men," he says. "We'll soon have all the supplies we need." He points to two young sailors, Harald and Leif. "You two stay to guard the ship—and while you're at it, you can mend the sail and untangle the lines."

Then he looks at you. "You can stay with Harald and Leif on the ship or come with the rest of us. Which will it be?"

---

*If you go ashore with Torfinn, turn to page 86.*

*If you stay on the ship with Harald and Leif, turn to page 91.*

You decide to warn the villagers immediately. You work your way to the bushes closest to the village and pretend to be looking at the scene below. A moment later some crows caw in a nearby tree. The warriors look up at them. You take off down the hill.

You don't look back to see if Torfinn's warriors are following you. You just keep racing toward the people dancing around their fire. When you're within hearing distance, you start waving your arms and yelling, *"Danger! Danger!"*

The villagers don't know your language, but they understand your meaning. The women jump up and begin herding the smaller children into their huts, and the men grab their clubs and spears.

You slow down a little and look over your shoulder toward the top of the hill. Torfinn's men have started down, swords raised high above their heads.

The Irish soon have their weapons ready. Many have shields and swords, and the women and some of the older children have rocks in their hands. Torfinn's warriors, halfway down the hill, slow their charge and then stop and stand uncertainly, as if not sure whether to press the attack.

Meanwhile, a man has come up to you. He is wearing a fine wolfskin cape, and you guess that he is probably the chieftain of the village.

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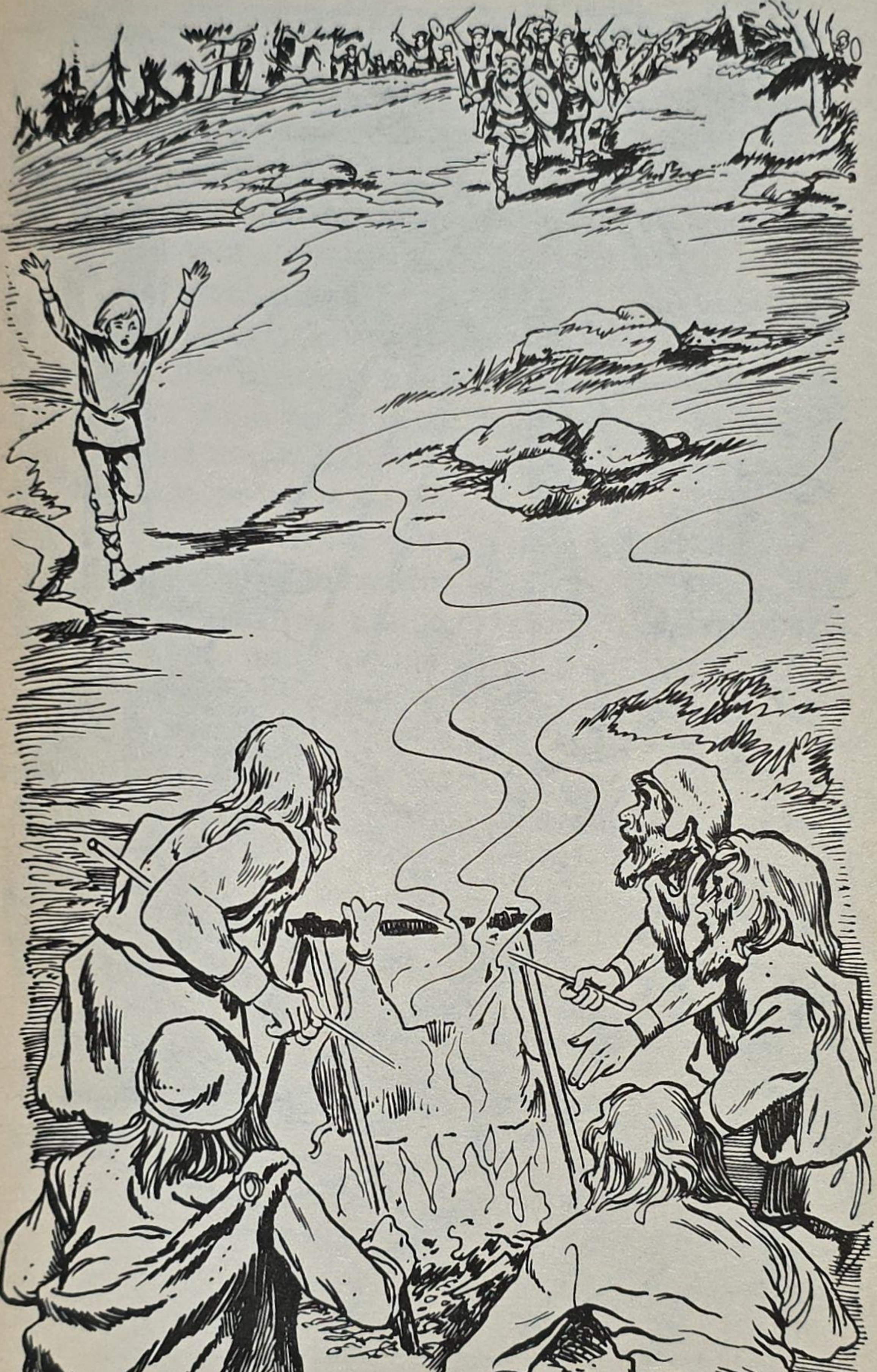
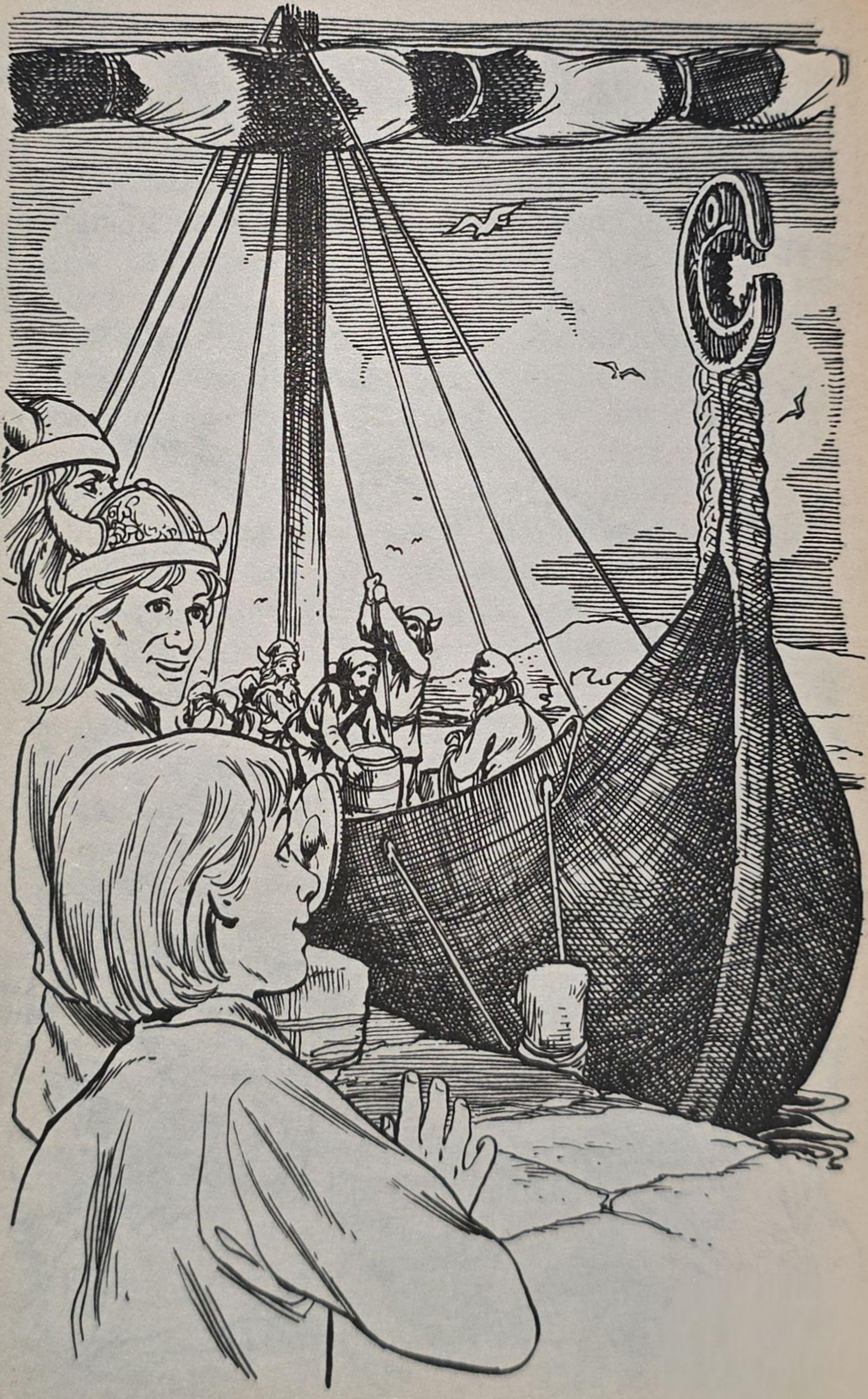
*Turn to page 4.*





You journey with Egil to the small fishing village which is to be your new home. Soon after your arrival, you set out with Egil, his son Svein, ten other crew members, and twelve oarsmen on a sixty-foot ship with high, pointed ends.

The great square sail is rigged on a mast made from a stout oak. The sail powers the ship, except when it's heading toward the wind. Then the rowers must go to work, for ships cannot move forward under sail alone unless the wind is from the side or the stern.

Your job, along with Svein's, is to help raise and lower the sail and to adjust the ropes to keep it trimmed. You are also supposed to help the men bail, using wooden scoops and buckets.

"If we run into heavy winds and seas," Egil says, "we'll have to bail as fast as we can, or we'll go to the bottom of the sea."

All day and all night Egil's ship journeys northwest, skirting islands large and small. A fair breeze carries the vessel along. The weather is good, and there's no bailing to do.

---

*Turn to page 15.*

You decide that it would be safer to wait for a chance to sneak away later. You don't want to draw attention to yourself, so you lean up against a tree and stand there for a long time as if lost in thought. Most of the warriors doze or amuse themselves playing dice as they wait for the villagers to go to bed.

When no one is watching, you drift away from the others and lean up against another tree. A couple of men look over at you, then turn away. A few minutes later an argument breaks out among the dice players. All eyes are on them. Now's your chance!

You slip silently into the woods, then move as fast as you can without making any noise. When you're far enough away, you break into a run. You find a deer trail and race along it, anxious to put as much distance between you and the warriors as possible.

Suddenly you hear noises on the trail behind you. They're coming after you!

Now you run full out. The trail crosses a narrow brook. Instead of leaping across it, you run along the gravelly bank for a few yards, then cut diagonally into the woods.

You race down the slope and come out in a pasture in the valley below. About fifty yards away a flock of sheep is grazing. Two shepherd boys stand nearby.

---

*Turn to page 45.*

A mountainous coast comes into view, and Torfinn lets out a roar.

*"Iceland!"* He slaps you on the back. "Well done, my young friend. The *Osprey* sailed well, and you steered a true course."

For a moment you almost like Torfinn, but then you remember that he can be friendly and jovial one minute and fierce and cruel the next. You resolve to continue to look for a chance to escape.

The *Osprey* sails through the night along the southern coast of Iceland. Even at midnight there's plenty of light in the sky. Half the crew members sleep or rest while the other half work and keep watch.

During your turn on watch, you are scanning the shoreline looking for a good harbor when you see a wisp of smoke rising from the shore. Torfinn and his most loyal warriors are sleeping. You almost call out to them to look, but then you realize that if you do, Torfinn will want to raid the settlement, take what he wants, and kill or enslave the people there. You keep silent.

A couple of hours later, when Torfinn is awake, you spot a good harbor. Torfinn orders the helmsman to steer the boat into it. Seabirds soar over your ship. A herd of walruses, basking on the rocks at the edge of the point, looks curiously out at you.

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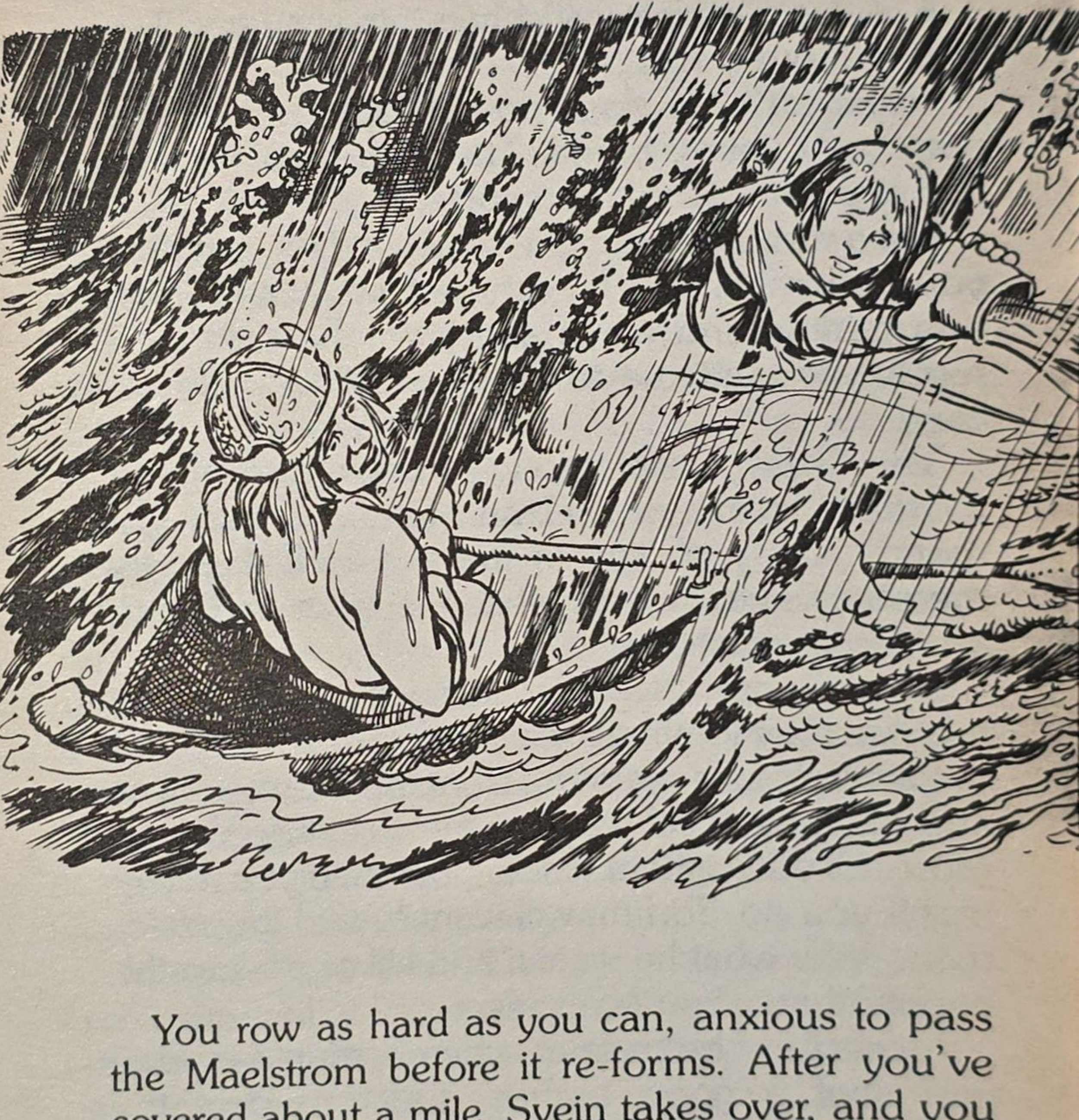
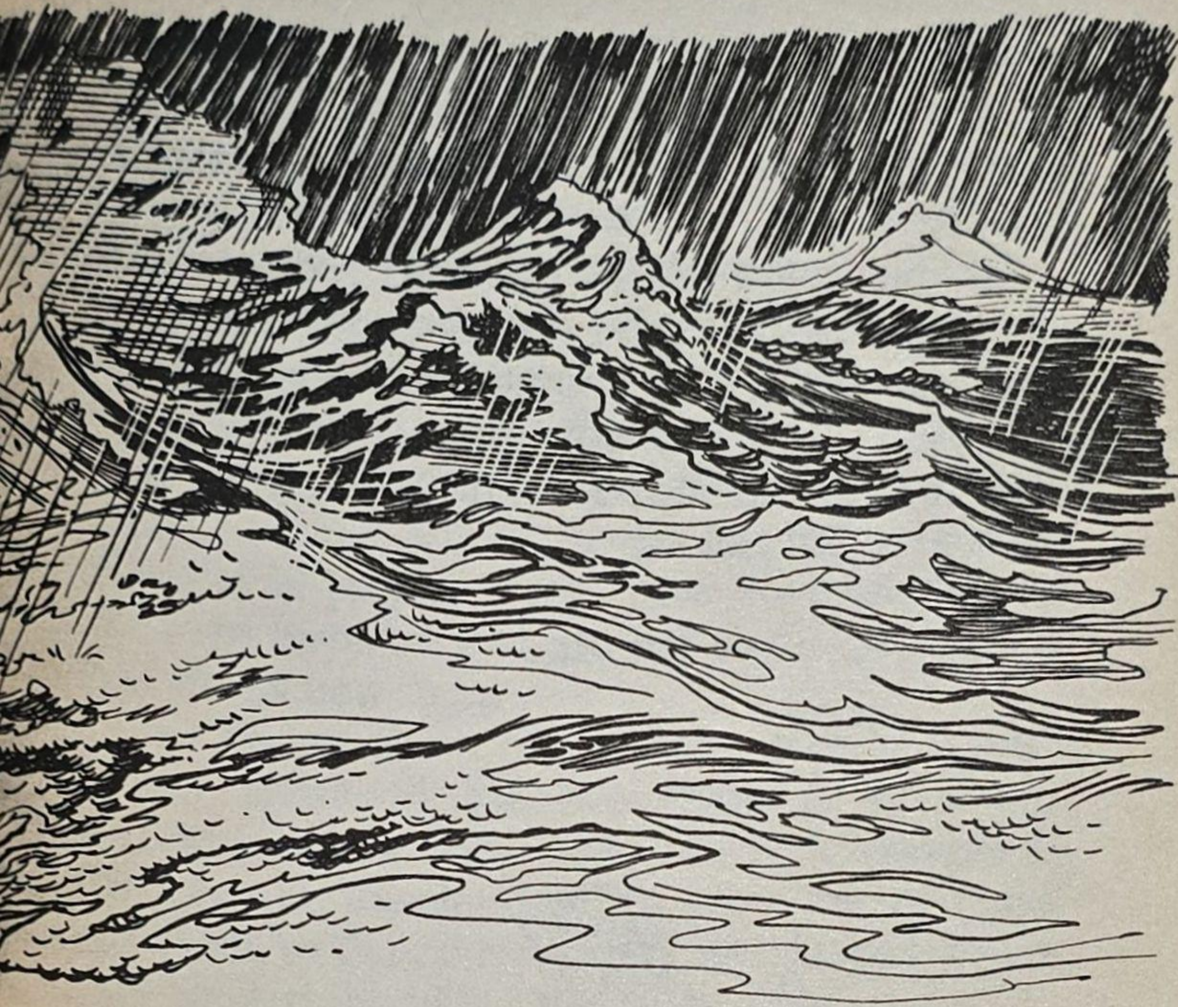
*Turn to page 76.*



You row as hard as you can, anxious to pass the Maelstrom before it re-forms. After you've covered about a mile, Svein takes over, and you sprawl out and close your eyes. When it's your turn to row again, you want to be as rested as possible.

You doze off for a while, but you're awakened by a strong wind and driving rain. Svein is still rowing, keeping the boat headed into the wind. The short period of summer darkness has arrived. The night is inky black, the wind fierce, and the rain like needles flung against your face. The boat



rocks and pitches. Heavy spray flies over the sides.

"You row now," Svein shouts over the wind. "I'll get ready to bail."

You grab the oars and start rowing, even though you can't see where you're going. You wonder where the Maelstrom forms. While the tide's slack, you could be right over the spot and not know it!

---

*Turn to page 18.*

# 108

"Wait," you say. "I'll tell you why I couldn't be a spy. I wouldn't have just come here, without pretending to be Irish. I was a slave. I warned the—"

The man interrupts to shout an order in his own language. You can't understand it, but you learn its meaning soon enough. You're still trying to convince the Irish of your innocence after you fail the trial by ordeal and two men seize you and lead you to the gallows.

**The End**

"Ask the boys who first saw me," you plead. "They will tell you I'm not a spy."

The Irishman looks puzzled, as if it is the strangest idea in the world to question a witness instead of seeing whether a hot coal burns.

"There are sorcerers whose hands are not burned even when they are guilty," you say. "But if you talk to the boys, then you can be sure."

The man turns to the other villagers and speaks rapidly in his own language, apparently telling them what you have said. After some discussion the man turns back to you and says, "Very well, I will do as you suggest."

He shouts some orders in his own language. Soon afterward the two shepherd boys are brought before him. They both look frightened. You can't understand the questions the man puts to them, or their answers, except that each points up toward the hill.

Finally the man nods. He turns to you and says, "The boys tell me that you were not hiding or spying and that you ran down from the hill shouting, 'Danger!'"

"That is what happened," you say.

The Irishman talks to the other villagers for a few minutes. Suddenly two men rush toward you with knives.

---

*Turn to page 58.*

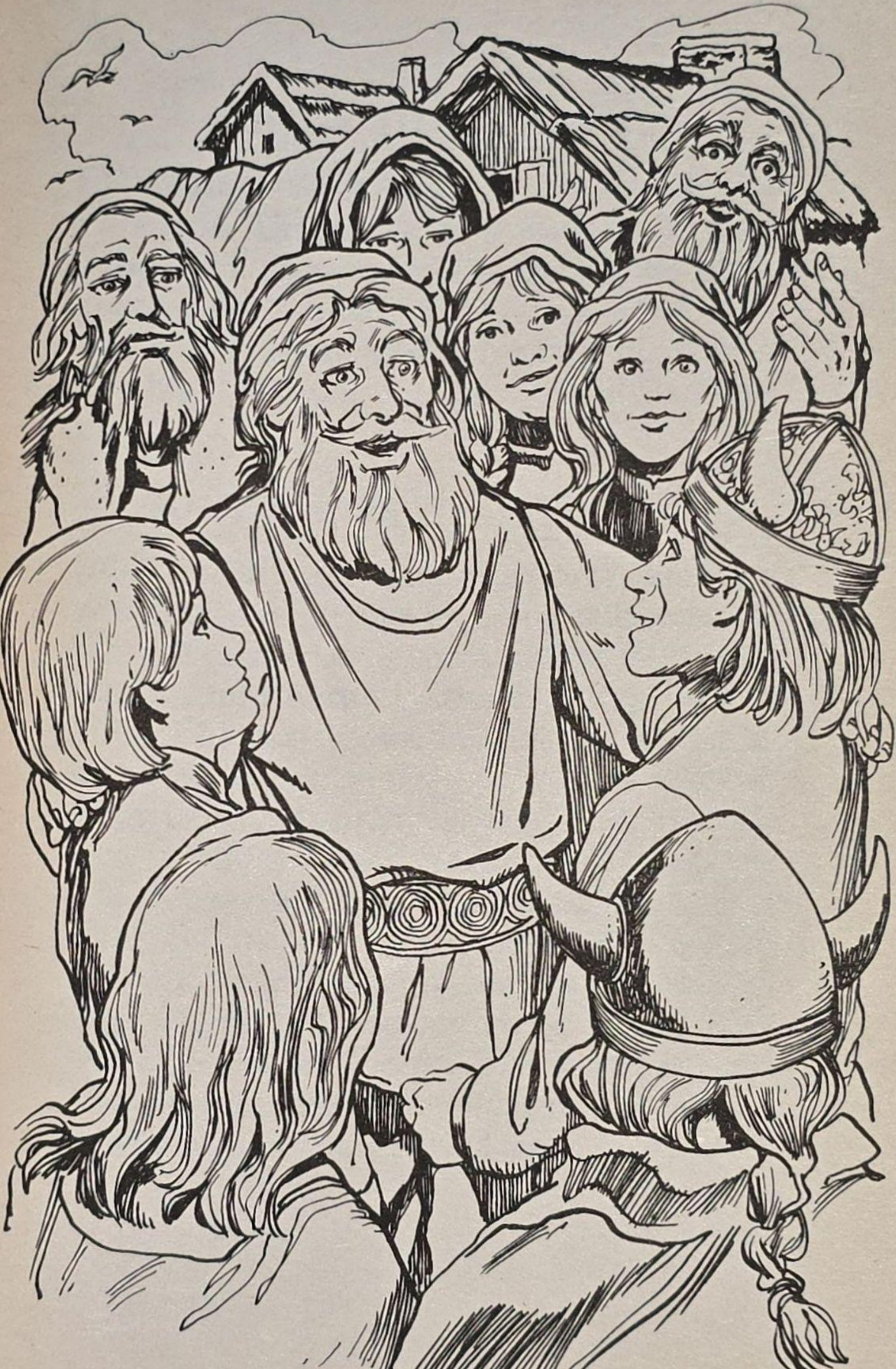
"We feared you were lost to the sea gods," Egil says to you and Svein after you have disembarked.

"The sea gods were kind to us," Svein says. "Our lives were saved, we found the great fishing grounds, and we passed over the Maelstrom without harm."

Egil looks amazed to hear all this. He questions you both closely on your adventures. Then he lays one hand on Svein's shoulder and the other on yours.

"You two have learned and seen more in a few days than most people do in a lifetime. You are both true and noble Vikings."

**The End**



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**EDWARD PACKARD** is a graduate of Princeton University and Columbia Law School. He developed the unique storytelling approach used in the Choose Your Own Adventure series while thinking up stories for his children, Caroline, Andrea, and Wells.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**RON WING** is a cartoonist and illustrator who has contributed to many publications. For the past several years he has illustrated the Bantam humor series of Larry Wilde's "Official" joke books. In addition, he has illustrated many books in Bantam's Choose Your Own Adventure series, including *You Are a Millionaire, Skateboard Champion, The Island of Time, Vampire Invaders,* and *Outlaw Gulch;* as well as titles in the Skylark Choose Your Own Adventure series, including *Haunted Halloween Party, A Day with the Dinosaurs, Spooky Thanksgiving,* and *You Are Invisible.* Mr. Wing now lives and works in Benton, Pennsylvania.

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